

Crimes & Punishments of Canadian Women

BOOK ONE

JEAN-CLAUDE CASTEX



To Marie-France with Love

CRIMES & PUNISHMENTS

OF

CANADIAN WOMEN

BOOK ONE

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Foreword

It came to my mind a kind of itch, a desire to call the first chapter "*Acclimatization*" because we are entering the world of horror, of capital punishment. And it is advisable to expect the worst. It is a domain that many —and among them the "do-gooders"¹—, pretend to desecrate with their contempt, but which fascinates them because death fascinates. I have tried to bring back to life all these women, victims of the gallows, to give them the unique chance to proclaim their innocence, if that was the case. For, some of them are entitled to convince us that they were, unfortunately, victims of miscarriages of Justice and that their lives have been unduly confiscated for the simple satisfaction of a conceited Prosecutor or by the carelessness of an inexperienced or inept lawyer. In these cases, the irreparable injustice intensifies the monstrosity of the act, as well as our exasperation. Bringing all these women out of oblivion was the most beautiful tribute I could pay to them, because all of them have suffered, and as such, they deserve our benevolent compassion.



So, I have rescued seventeen women from oblivion, with their strengths and weaknesses, their crimes and punishments, their guilt and innocence. They are the only

¹ Traditionalists, bien-pensants, conformists.

Canadian women who died by the decision of Justice in this land that is today our great country².



The motives of their crimes are particularly remarkable, compared to those of the 699 men who suffered the death penalty³: extramarital love was the main motivation for fifteen of them⁴, theft and religious discrimination in two cases⁵, and revenge in one⁶. For males, the order of the motives was practically reversed, and the intoxication of drunkenness more frequent than that of amorous passion. The *modus operandi* of these crimes was quite varied: with firearms (4 cases), with poison (3 cases), with an axe or sickle (4 cases), with sticks (2 cases), by fire (1 case), by suffocation (1 case), by punching (1 case), and finally by explosive (only one case). What is usually striking is the youth of the lover in relation to the husband. This explains why it was often the lover who struck the fatal blow, at the instigation of the wife. French-speaking criminals are

² ●Eleanor Power (1754), Catherine Snow (1834), Mary Aylward (1862), Phoebe Campbell (1872), Elizabeth Workman (1873), Emily Blake (1899), Cordélia Viau-Poirier (1899), Florence Lassandro (1923), Marie Beaulne (1929), Tomasina Sarao (1935), Elizabeth-Anne Tilford (1935), Marie-Louise Cloutier (1940), Elizabeth Popovitch (1946) and Marguerite Ruest-Pitre (1953). The Marie-Joseph Angélique (1734), Marie-Josèphthe Corriveau (1761) and Marie- Anne Crispin (en 1858) were treated by the same author in two books entitled *La ballade des pendues : la tragique histoire de trois Québécoises pendues pour crime*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Québec, 2011; and also in *Les Grands dossiers criminels du Canada*, Book 1 and 2, Éditions Pierre Tisseyre, Ottawa, 1990.

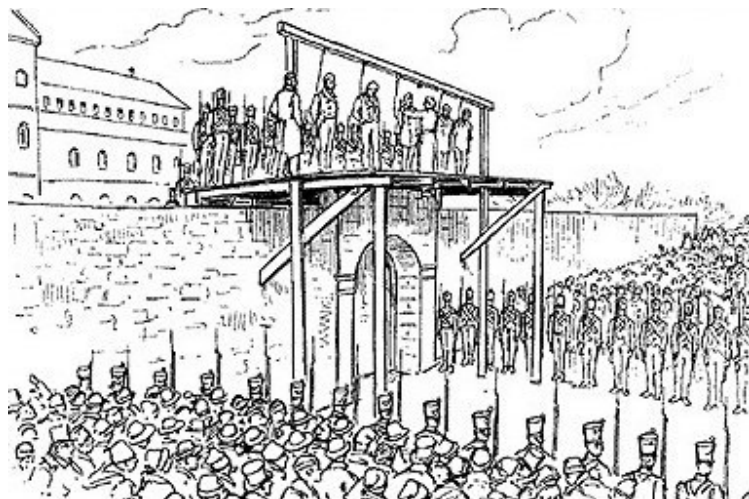
³ Since 1867.

⁴ ●Phoebe Campbell. Elizabeth Workman. Emily-Hilda Blake. Cordélia Viau-Poirier. Florence Lassandro. Marie Beaulne. Tomasina Sarao. Elizabeth-Anne Tilford. Marie-Louise Cloutier. Marguerite Ruest-Pitre. Marie-Josèphthe Corriveau. Marie-Anne Crispin.

⁵ ●Eleanor Power. Catherine Snow. Mary Aylward

⁶ ●Marie-Joseph Angélique. Le total donne 18, à cause de la multiplicité des mobiles chez certaines.

usually born in Canada; the others generally originated in England, Italy or elsewhere.



Type of gallows intended to hang a large number of convicts simultaneously. This showed that the English colonial authorities used and abused of death penalty during the colony following the French-Canadian insurrection of 1837. Hanging of French-Canadian patriots in front of a Montreal prison. Drawing by Henri Julien.
National Archives of Canada



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A long howl in the darkness

The Phœbe Campbell Murder Case (1871)

In all things, it is necessary to evoke its opposite, suggested a philosopher¹: "thus, in happiness, represent misfortune; in friendship, hostility; in love, hatred and in trust, betrayal." If we did so, we would be wiser and more careful in our romantic relationships. But who would then dare to venture into the cutthroat of marriage? The Phœbe Campbell file is the clear illustration of this.

In most homes of the small Ontario village of Thorndale, the work week ended very cheerfully in the artificial paradise of beer, whisky, and juniper vapors. It was usually in these pleasures of the Poor, that all the hard-working people of this *Valley-of-Thorns* consoled themselves for this hard and pitiless life. Thorndale was a well-deserved name granted to this area by its first founder James Shanly when he saw this site covered with groves and thorny bushes. But on that evening of Friday the 14th of July 1871, when a new province was joining Canada, our beautiful country², no one suspected that this infertile, and even insignificant village would for once be talked about.



¹ •This philosopher was Arthur Schopenhauer in his book *Parerga and Paralipomena*, which means in Greek: *Supplements and omissions*.

² •British Columbia had just joined the new Canadian Confederation, for fear of being absorbed by the United States whose gold miners were invading this English colony.

Hugh Macdonald's little clock hand had long since crossed the top of the dial to start the following day, when it all began. At around 1:40am, on this Saturday, July 15th, 1871, Hugh was getting ready to go to bed after having admired the stars twinkling in the great black sheet of the sky. With alcohol helping, he dreamed that he was catching all that stardust in a butterfly net before it disappeared into the night mist. Hugh Macdonald lived in a one room log cabin, located 5 km from the village on the banks of the *Rivière La Tranche* that the English of Ontario would soon rename *The Thames* to remind them of the dear country they had to leave to escape poverty.

Hugh lay down on his bed and closed his eyes after hugging and embracing his sleeping wife. A veil of cloudiness was already beginning to blur the golden disk of the moon and all the constellations that were assiduously courting this aster.

Suddenly shrill screams tore apart the serene stillness of the night:

—*Help! Help!... Murder! ... “Come help!... Hurry!*

And then, after a moment of heavy silence:

—*Isn't there anyone here who will hear me tonight?*



Cabin of the Campbells.
Private Collection.

These woman's distress cries, which echoed so gloomily in the darkness, were evidently coming from the Campbell cabin, two hundred meters from the Macdonalds' house. It was their closest neighbor in this village with a habitat scattered over a wide area, at a time when anyone could build his house wherever they wanted, without worrying about municipal regulations and bylaws that did not yet exist.

Historically, the Campbell and Macdonald Clans were die-hard enemies. The Campbells had long collaborated in Scotland with the royal Protestant troops to subdue or destroy their Scottish brothers, the Macdonalds³.

Thirty years earlier, during the insurrection of the French-Canadians (in 1837), it was the Scottish Highlanders regiments (their best troops) that the English government sent to crush the revolt. Eventually, all these Highlanders received, in reward, farming concessions in Ontario, along the Quebec border, in order to be able to intervene quickly and swiftly if these turbulent and fiery French-Canadians wanted to rebel again.

—Help! Help!... Murder! ... “Come help!... Hurry! ... Isn't there anyone here who will hear me tonight?

This female cry of distress, imploring, thrown in the serene silence of the night, threw panic into the placid mind of Hugh Macdonald. He leapt to his feet, and then, courageous but not foolhardy, he rushed not to the rescue of Phœbe Campbell, whom he knew and whose voice was

³ • This collaboration was done on a religious basis: the Macdonalds or McDonalds were Catholic, while Clan Campbell had become Protestant, like the English. There were even massacres (Glencoe). "The great secret to destroy at the end any enemy lies in the art of knowing how to put the division between them." Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Art. 13, Concord, and discord. Thus, were defeated the Scots; where the Roman legions had failed, the English soldiers did not even have to fight themselves.

so familiar to him, but rather he rushed to a couple of other Scottish neighbors, William Craig and Richard Blakmore. He waked them up and have them escort him to the Campbell's, in the midst of the most blinding darkness.

One of Phœbe's immediate neighbors, an Englishman named Thomas Davis, even more cautious than the two Scots, took fifteen long minutes to show up at the scene of the help call. Everyone found this slowness very unusual and even very compromising, because in certain cases, excessive caution can be incriminating.

On their arrival, all these "rescuers" discovered a curious scene: Phœbe, the lady living in this cabin was sitting in the doorway with her little daughter Mary-Anne in her arms.

—*My poor George has been murdered!* she said, seeing them approaching with caution.

—*Murdered?* they replied in horror.

Phœbe⁴, 23 years old, married for 4 years and mother of two children, then launched herself into a description of the horrible butchery which had taken place shortly before:

—*Yeah! Two black vagabonds entered our cabin and rushed at poor George, shouting: "Your Money or Your Life!"* George replied that he had no money, so one of the blacks put a gun to his temple and pressed the trigger, but a simple metallic click indicated that the pistol was jammed. So, he threw the gun to the ground. A fight to the death began between George and the two intruders in the

⁴ "Phœbe comes from the Greek Phoibos = pure and luminous like the sun. Gaston de Foix was nicknamed Phébus (or Fébus) because his blond hair made him look like the sun, in a region, the South-West of France, where men were brown.

only room of the cabin. George yelled at me, "Give me the axe, Phœbe!" But, hearing this, one of the attackers took it from my hands and hit George. My husband then shouted at me, "Give me the big butcher's knife, Phœbe!" But then again, one of the blacks seized it...

—What a bad luck! Keep going!

—The three men threw themselves on top of each other, spun like lunatics. They even came across the trundle bed in which the children slept. The children then woke up and started crying. I took the youngest in my arms and sat on the bed on which I held her tightly while the men fought like frenzied madmen around us... I didn't try to save myself because the children were screaming, and I couldn't leave them alone...



The story of Phœbe, the wife, seemed extravagant, if not delusional. How could this fierce fight have unfolded in this tiny and totally dark room without waking the children? How would she have stayed there, waiting for the two assassins to have finished chopping her husband with great blows of the axe! How could neither she nor the children have been reached in absolute darkness by the fearsome blade of the knife or, worse, by the heavy axe that was to fly in the blinding darkness like a bloodthirsty vulture? Moreover, in total darkness—at a time only the rich could afford electric lighting—how could she have noticed that the attackers were black? Also, at the beginning of the story, the two murderers were black, but towards the end, they were whites who had made up in black... Despite this important variation in her singular description, she continued to refer to them as "blacks".

Phœbe spoke at length, and, to top it all off, curiously ended up concluding her account by stating that she "*regretted what had happened*." This strange comment struck the three neighbors. They did not fail to mention it later to the investigators who found these statements incriminating. Burning their fingers with the flame of one or two matches, the Scots saw George's body lying on the floor inside. None of the three ventured inside. Then Phœbe entered alone and brought back her baby—an 11-month-old baby. She handed him to one of the men. Then she took the hand of little Mary-Anne (3 years old) and walked away from the house repeating several times to the little girl that: "*Two black men had killed her Dad!*" She seemed to be trying to convince Mary-Anne... and specially to persuade herself.

Only five and a half years had passed since the famous December 18th, 1865, which had marked the abolition of slavery in the United States by the XIIIth Amendment to the American Constitution. Since that glorious and memorable day, many African Americans, exhilarated by their new freedom, wandered along the hundred thousand roads of the United States and Canada, in search of a hypothetical paid job. For, the employers who tried to provide jobs for all these blacks when they worked for free, were now reluctant to pay them for their labor. As a result, the recurring theme of the *black vagabond who had committed a crime* was widely used by criminals to ward off suspicion as far away as possible from themselves. Consequently, many blacks were lynched for being in the vicinity of a crime at the time it was perpetrated; "in the wrong place, at the wrong time", as some say.

In the Middle Ages, Jews were often accused of spreading epidemics of plague, cholera or leprosy. All the

police forces of recent times —municipal, countal, provincial and federal— had heard this familiar tune many times of the black prowler as scapegoat; a familiar tune that only impressed those new to the subtle art of criminal investigation.

As for the pistol mentioned by the wife in her irrational story, it was found. The investigation showed that it belonged to William Robert Taylor, a young man from Sainte Marie, a small town a few kilometres from London, 75 km from Paris⁵. Taylor claimed that he had sold it to a 19-year-old, with a beardless face, named Thomas Coyle. However, investigations later proved that Coyle had been ripped off by the seller, as the firing pin was missing and the firearm was completely harmless,... except by throwing it with force at the enemy's head.

As Blackmore and Macdonald went to wake the village and alert the local policeman who was sleeping, William Craig led the two children, and Phœbe herself, to their father and grandfather, Joseph McWain.

The next afternoon, a Coroner's Jury, assembled hastily, came to observe the body of "*poor George*", totally disfigured and split over its entire surface with many bloody crevices, like from the blade of a butcher's cleaver.

⁵ • In Europe, these two cities are located 450 km apart. Judge Thomas Galt was born in London, England, in 1815, and had immigrated to Canada in 1833 at the age of 18 to work with the Canada Co. (a colonization company designed to populate Ontario with English subjects. He later became a judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Ontario (Cour des Plaids Communs). Common pleas are cases between citizens, as opposed to those involving the State (the Court of King's or Queen's Bench). Blood crimes were dealt with by the King's or Queen's Bench, of which Thomas Galt had become a judge.

It was the beginning of the Summer and they had to hurry to proceed to the burial. They hastened, from Sunday morning, to expose the remains in a coffin padded with white satin, in the center of the unique room of his own house. The coffin rested on the same bed on which George had been savagely slaughtered. The authorities demanded that he be buried in the afternoon to avoid the misdeeds of corruption which, unfortunately, does not only degrade politicians, lawyers and magistrates.



*Phoebe McWain-Campbell, her husband, her two children and their house in Ontario.
Priv.Coll.*

The people of the village and the county were horrified at the announcement of this inhuman and ruthless butchery. Moreover, at the end of the funeral, the crowd was fuming and roaring, literally like a furious tiger, in a state of excitement bordering on riot. Therefore, the crocodile tears of Phoebe quickly turned into real sobs of fright. A thousand men and women of Thorndale and from the north shore of Lake Ontario came to gather like a buzzing swarm around the log cabin of Phoebe Campbell who lamented even more with tears of despair, referring to his

"poor George" in affectionate terms, especially when the hateful mob began to invective her with accusations punctuated by numerous blasphemies and profanities. The tears of the wife were no longer feigned, far from there, for she feared more and more that the horror of the assassination did cause her neighbors to hang her without further delay, in accordance with the biblical canons: "*An Eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!*" in perfect line with the expeditious policy of the judge Lynch⁶.

In spite of her closed door, barred with two cross-bars, behind which Phœbe had taken refuge as soon as she had felt burn the rag of hatred and revenge, she clearly heard some outbursts commenting on each detail of the murder, and analyzing each menacing theory for her own life:

—*I tell you it's her!" It's certain!* shouted a man, accompanying his frequent accusations by many blasphemies.

—*George Campbell*, scolded another man angrily, *possessed a large sum of money and that certainly was the cause of the murder!*

A bonus of \$500 was immediately promised by the Municipality of Thorndale to anyone who would allow the arrest of the killer(s). Police Inspector Harry Phair from the Municipality of London received the file from his hierarchical superior. He very quickly got down to work. Irish immigrant from Armagh, who arrived in Canada when he was a child, he had become a shoemaker then policeman around 1862. Excellent investigator and tapped by ambition, he had quickly climbed the hierarchical ladder.

⁶ • According to tradition, Judge Lynch (of Irish origin) truncated the trials of royalist Englishmen who opposed the independence of the United States during the American Revolution and executed them without sufficient evidence.

When he arrived in Thorndale, he had already acquired some notoriety by taking care of the famous Donnellys' Files in Lucan⁷. He died on October 19th, 1892, a victim of duty, killed by the guns of two bandits he was trying to lock up.

Out of respect for Criminal Procedure, but without any conviction, Inspector Harry Phair began right away to search for the two black men mentioned by Phœbe. As he expected, he quickly established that this was only a red herring launched by Mrs. Campbell, the young widow of 23 years. This made him suspect her; which was well deserved, because why else would she wanted to mislead the police?

Upon arriving, Phair also learned that popular suspicion identified the killer as the English Thomas Davis, the man who, for some unknown reason, had taken fifteen long minutes to come to the aid of the Scots. Some expeditious people, even offered to immediately hang him under the neighboring plum tree to make him pay a crime he may not have committed. The populace showed so much exaltation in its desire to "*take the law in its own hands*" as it was said at that time, that the policeman saw himself in the immediate obligation to arrest Thomas Davis and incarcerate him, more to protect him from the inconsistency of the "volunteer vigilantes" than to prevent him to run away. Davis himself had moreover begged Phair to shelter him from all these overexcited avengers, blinded by rage or ethnic resentment. What about his delay at the

⁷ • The Ontario township of *Lucan Biddulph* had been cleared from trees and founded by black slaves escaped from the United States and refugees in Canada. But for various reasons (perpetrated by the English Orangemen) the township was almost entirely abandoned by the blacks and repopulated by newly arrived poor Irish immigrants. A neighborhood dispute triggered the massacre of an entire Irish family by Protestant Orangemen. They called the Donnellys *the Black Donnellys* out of contempt.

scene of the crime? No mystery! "He had simply been delayed by a trivial crisis of epilepsy!" These attacks hit him wildly when stress gripped his mind. It was this scary night! No doubt!

At the time of those events, he had just recovered from a violent attack of this disease, which, in the old days, was believed of divine origin since a deified Roman Emperor had been afflicted by it. Davis was then struggling to come to his senses with difficulty when a neighbor came to notify him of the crime. That was certainly an excellent reason not to rush to the scene of the massacre, right? Definitely! retorted the wicked tongues, but epilepsy was easier to confess than cowardice or worse... guilt!

Unfortunately for Davis, the policeman found in his home, damp clothes that had just been washed and still showing traces of bloodstains. Back then, in Anglophone Canada, every village, every neighborhood, curiously did the cloth washing the same day. The washerwoman who had the courage to hang out her washing before sunrise, had the intimate pleasure of considering herself as the bravest, most virtuous person in the county; and convincing herself that all her neighbors saw her as such. It could be an intoxicating compensation for other faults, physical or moral, or for extreme poverty. However, in Thorndale, the day of washing was on Monday and this wet linen found on Saturday morning, lead to all sorts of malicious interpretations. Why then had Davis violated the unwritten rule of the Monday Washing? And the answer arose clearly in all minds: "*To wash away his crime!*" Elementary, my dear Watson!

—*No, not at all!* replied Thomas Davis. *I killed... chickens.*

As no chicken corpse could support his claims, and no one ventured to lick the brown marks to try to discover whether it was dry blood, dirt or... some other organic substance in the scatological kind, Davis was arrested and held for eight days, until the Coroner's Inquest was completed. And his father-in-law John Priestley, who was supposed to spend his nights with him, was also locked up for presumption of complicity, and (above all) for taking him away from the zealots who wanted to hang him without judgment. "Among these, the policeman thought, scratching his beard like a perplexed patriarch, the real assassin must have sneered" even more feverish than the others in looking for a criminal to clear himself of all suspicion and wash away the mistrust of his enemies. The two suspects were white, a color which no longer coincided with the first testimony of the widow Campbell. *Hell with these insignificant details!*

The gossip of the neighbors, always much appreciated in a criminal investigation, very quickly taught the policeman Phair that the Campbell couple was struggling. But it was also the case in most households prematurely worn out by poverty, alcohol, and endless arguments. Some even assured that the couple was downright "on the rocks" as the *whiskey shandies* that lubricated, each evening, their marital relations. In fact, their couple had never really functioned correctly despite the presence of two children, whose Phoebe's plump breasts still nourished the younger.

George was much older than her, and she claimed that he was particularly jealous of his young, too young wife; and very suspicious of a very young boy from the neighborhood, named Thomas Coyle, who also seemed inclined to share Mom's nipples with Baby. *Thomas Coyle?*

Wait! Wait! The man who had bought a pistol, perhaps! The old George is even said to have hustled his wife on one occasion in a fit of jealousy... "*unjustified!*" did she certify to several neighbors. The gossip mongers assured Harry Phair that the two lovers had at least once crossed the Rubicon, like Caesar in the footsteps of Pompey.

Alea jacta est! The dice was cast, this pastoral idyll could only finish at the end of a hemp rope. The investigator found all this gossips very instructive, and set out resolutely on the track of adultery, so banal and so widespread in the Victorian society of the time, eager for "sulphurous consolations" to satiate their libido in spite of the hypocritical moral which, according to them, oppressed.

Phair learned that the seducer for whom Phœbe had lost her mind, Thomas Coyle, was only 19 years old and was a *day laborer* living a few kilometers away, in the farm of Joseph McWain, who happened to be the Phœbe's father. How small is the world! The pieces of the puzzle placed themselves. The investigator went question the teenager and concluded that it was he who went to Sainte-Marie to buy the defective pistol. William Taylor had sold him the revolver as a weapon in working order. Taylor even came to discreetly identify, from a distance, the buyer Coyle. Without a doubt, if it wasn't him, he looked like him like two drops of whiskey! Phair proceeded to arrest Thomas Coyle and locked him up to prevent him from going off or being prematurely hanged by scatterbrained vigilantes.

At this point in the investigation, the police officer was convinced that Phœbe was the killer, with young Coyle as her possible accomplice. Why *possible*? Because three farm workers swore that they had spent the evening and the crime night with Thomas at the McWain farm. It

was a alibi in tungsten, a metal of incredible resistance that the Spanish had just discovered 89 years earlier.

Another element which undoubtedly contributed to criminalize Phœbe in the eyes of the jurors of the Coroner Inquest, was that she insisted very heavily on the fact that she had often been bullied by her old husband. She insisted on this fact with such emphasis that investigators did not fail to see in it a confession. Was she trying to justify the crime she nevertheless refused to confess? Without any doubt!

As for the thesis of the two murderous marauders, if the Defense Counsel did not seem at all convinced of this speculation, why then would the jury have agreed to it? Especially as Phœbe changed her version at the slightest breeze like a well-oiled weathervane. Phair, who wanted to probe Coyle's involvement had received varying and even contradictory answers from Phœbe. and even opposite answers from Phœbe. The young woman had initially mentioned the existence of the two mysterious black marauders, then white marauders in blackface, after which she tried to accuse her young lover; and finally blamed the crime on John McWain, her own cousin.



On May 20th, the young woman had therefore written an eight-page confession in which she implicated her lover, young Coyle. According to this statement, two months before the assassination, she had confided on the pillow her misfortunes to Coyle. "*Her husband was very rough with her*", she claimed, shedding tears of distress. Caught in pity between two *naughty bumps*, the young man "*promised he would give her a hand*" (according to her), "*provided that she would later marry him.*"

If the desire to "tie the knot" of the rope around their lives had been Coyle's primary motivation, he narrowly missed being offered by the Canadian Justice a noose around his neck as a punishment for crime!

On another occasion, the two lovers thought of poison, more discreet, then they decided for a firearm, certainly louder but more performant (provided that the gun had a percussion pin). So, Coyle bought the gun. The date of the execution of the troublesome and annoying husband was even fixed for July 15th, on a Friday evening *after he received the cheque*⁸ for his exhausting weekdays of work. As we see, Phœbe was firmly keeping her feet on the ground. So, the two lovers could hope to celebrate their success and their new freedom without travesties, without a shadow in the sky.



According to Phœbe's written confession, young Coyle "had thus agreed to kill her husband." The famous evening of crime, he entered the room where the old husband was about to fall into a restful sleep. No pun intended. The lover aimed at the head he guessed at the dark spot on the pillow. He fired in the dark, but the gun didn't work; and for good reason; it had no firing pin. This detail made the gun as effective as a child's toy.

Fortunately, the sleeping husband had not reacted to the click of the gun. Coyle then took an axe with which he struck the husband with the non-cutting back. Under the shock, George finally awoke from his first sleep, got up and rushed at the assailant. The two men fought with ardor

⁸ The pay was then weekly. Phœbe did not lose her bearings.

and despair. Coyle was younger and more robust, and had not been injured by the axe like George. Despite these advantages, Coyle shouted to Phœbe to pass the large butcher's knife, used to kill the pig. Armed with this formidable weapon, Coyle had the upper hand. He cut George's throat. Then, still according to her, the assassin washed his hands and examined (in near total darkness) his clothes to remove the blood. (!) That done, he returned to the *McWain Farm* and went back to bed without being noticed by other sleeping employees. Anxious to leave Coyle the time to get back to bed, the young woman waited a while before going out on the path with the aim of throwing her distress calls to the moon.

Following this second version which incriminated the lover⁹, Phair placed the young Thomas Coyle in a cell located very close to that of his mistress Phœbe. He was hoping that the two lovers would communicate and that their unbridled conversations would reveal the role played by each. Effectively, the stratagem turned out to be almost excellent. Phœbe, suspicious and convinced that she was being tapped, quickly began to accuse two men, not only Coyle but also her¹⁰ cousin John McWain. However, she was careful not to give the slightest proof... and for good reason!

Their comments confirmed, if need be, that the relationship between Phœbe and her young and handsome apprentice were not the most chaste, even if the beautiful woman played the role of Outraged Virtue when Coyle reminded her of the good times spent in the conjugal bed of

⁹ Remember that the first version accused two black vagabonds, then white ones with black make-up.

¹⁰ Phœbe's cousin, of course.

George Campbell. This had especially taken place when Coyle boarded with the couple. So were confirmed the various rumors, according to which the old husband George Campbell had never thought of sending a single word of reproach to his wife concerning her behavior very unorthodox.

On July 19th, a friend of the victim, John Barry, was also arrested and incarcerated, because a neighbor had once heard him prophesy: "*Alone as you are in this isolated and far from every house, you're going to be murdered one of these days!*" That very day, policeman Phair, in a horse-drawn carriage, drove the weeping widow to London. She was always crying when questioned by police. She probably thought that her crocodile tears which had so moved her Dad, in her youth, when she wanted to avoid suffering the consequences of her messing around, would also spare her any punishment from the judge and jurors.

Phœbe was carefully questioned, once again. Two days later, she was again called back to London with her father and brother Hugh for further investigation and confrontation. At the end of this second questioning, the three witnesses were all kept in prison. The next day, July 22nd, the cousin of the widow, John McWain, was himself taken into custody for questioning. After the sixth incarceration for the same murder, people began to fear that the whole village would end up behind bars.

On July 27, the 18 members who made up the team of Coroner¹¹ investigators and who had reserved some rest

¹¹ In French of William the Conqueror in England. "The Coroners were formerly called coronatores, because they were especially charged with keeping the peace everywhere in the name of the Crown." from Du Boys, Albert (1804-1889). *History of the Criminal*

during the weekend, resumed their investigations which were interrupted by Sunday spiritualities. Three of detainees, Priestley, Barry and Davis, were eventually released for lack of evidence.

On August 4th, at the end of the Coroner's Inquest, a first verdict declared that there was a case for prosecution against the wife and her lover Coyle:

"We, the members of the Jury, charged with investigating the death of George Campbell, have come to the conclusion, after examining the body and hearing the evidence, that George Campbell was murdered by two persons whom we believe to be Thomas Coyle and Phœbe Campbell."

As a result, Phœbe's brother and father were immediately released as well. The trial of the lovers in the Court of Queen's Bench (the Assizes) was set for the spring of 1872.



On April 1st, 1872, the Assize trial of Phœbe Campbell opened in London (Ontario) before Judge Thomas Galt. This was a sensational event which hit the judiciary headlines of the time. The charges were finally laid, but it was necessary to convince a jury of the Court of Assizes, tougher than a Coroner's jury. Me. Kenneth McKenzie represented the Crown and Me. Frank Comish and Edmund Meredith, the Defense.

Law of Modern Peoples, considered in its relation to the progress of civilization, from the fall of the Roman Empire to the nineteenth century, by Albert Du Boys,... 1860. Chapter IV, Des coroners, in Britt. Laws of England, folio 3. p.72. Text available on the *Gallica* site of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Phœbe showed up in *black clothes of mourning*, noted some journalists. Many thought that she was already *mourning for her own life*. Long redhead braids cascaded over her shoulders like volcanic lava, the very symbol of her audacious temperament. Despite everything, she remained calm and seemed in full possession of herself. On April Fool's Day, Phœbe, who had already changed her defense several times, adopted another strategy, another version of the facts which disconcerted, even more, the lawyer in charge of her defense.

Faced with the overflowing imagination of the accused, the crowd immediately became stormy and hostile. From the first hour of the session, a bunch of men even tried to break into the courtroom. The judge restored order by threatening to have the most agitated rioters arrested and make them wait behind bars to allow them to be sleeping off the alcohol they had swallowed too casually.

As for Thomas Coyle, who had furnished the useless pistol, he was simply released, no doubt because of his youth and the false accusations he had been subjected by Phœbe. Everyone had a premonition that she had seduced this teenager for the sole purpose of enslaving him by the sex and make him bear the blame of the crime. He was 19 at the time of the crime, and the woman twenty three. Obviously, the preposterous accusations of Phœbe during the Coroner's Inquest worked in favor of the young man.

The first two days, the jury heard from several witnesses who had been in direct contact with Phœbe the very night of murder. All evoked the first version of the crime she had tried hard to make them believe, and who had been imagined by the too fertile mind of the accused, then very quickly abandoned: that of the so-called black prowlers, a very common misleading theme at the time.

On the evening of April 4th, Phœbe, doubtless unhappy with the credibility granted to all her whimsical versions, summoned the Attorney General of the County, Mr. Hutchinson, to register a new version of the crime. This time, she frankly accused her lover of the full and complete responsibility of the crime, denying any complicity on her part:

—My Husband and I went to bed at 11:00 p.m. I had fallen asleep with my baby in the back part of the bed, when I was awakened by my husband's screams. I heard distinctly the blows that someone was throwing at my husband. (It was, of course, an inky night)... My husband asked for the knife, aloud, and I grabbed it (The sole room of the house was small). The killer yelled, "Don't give him a knife or you too will suffer the same fate! I immediately recognized Thomas Coyle's voice.... hitting him with an axe... Coyle repeated to me several times, after the crime, what I had to declare, and I did it. I was afraid to tell the truth because he had me warned that if I denounced him, I too would be hanged."

Her new version completed and signed was only intended to completely exonerate her. Phœbe asked to see her father. Then she wanted to visit the young Thomas Coyle in his cell (before he was released) to reveal to him that she had generously loaded him of the whole burden of the crime before the judicial authorities. Perhaps she hoped that he would agree, out of love, to bear the whole burden of the crime. But it was nothing of it! A witness of the conversation stated that Coyle was very surprised and even amused, in a way, as if he found highly ridiculous this incredible denunciation

But this more amused than angry reaction of Coyle had a startling effect on Phœbe's mind. The following morning, concerned with reinforcing the persuasive value of her last revelations, she brought in her own favor the complacent testimony of none other than... her own deceased husband. A testimony that she considered compelling and absolutely irrefutable:

—Last night George appeared to me in a night vision, she affirmed to the stunned judge, with a look of inspiration. He said to me, "Phœbe, I assert that you are innocent. Blame for my death can only fall on the shoulders of this poor Coyle!"

How to challenge the very words of the victim himself? Good ! The crime had been perpetrated in the most complete darkness. But Phœbe had no doubt that, seen from Heaven, this murder must have shown the greatest clarity. She swore that this time she was telling the truth! What provoked a discouraged silence from her lawyer and an immense outburst of anger from the Crown Prosecutor: "*You can hardly expect anyone to believe such nonsense?*" he thundered in the courtroom with the liveliness of Cicero in the *Catilinarians*.

As a result, the next day, no doubt wishing to find a more believable culprit, Phœbe switched to another assassin. She simply added a detail that she considered indisputable to definitively convince the jurors of her own innocence and of the guilt of none other than... John McWain. This time she said that the first thing she had realized when she woke up in the dark, was that an axe was striking her husband, who was screaming.

—I couldn't see the axe, but I could hear it, she said. It was too dark to identify the man...

In the inky night, while striking her husband's head with great blows of axe, as if, with effort he or she was felling a fir tree, the assassin tried to explain to Phœbe the reasons for her anger and her desire for retaliation:

—I had to get revenge on your husband. I would have shot him dead if the pistol had not jammed.

Nightmarish situation, or rather... irrational and even extravagant! Then Phœbe asked:

—Is that you, John McWain?...

I wanted to confirm that this voice was that of my cousin John, she explained to the jurors. And the man answered —matter of fact—, quite simply, continuing unfazed to slaughter the old man:

—Yes it's me!

—Why are you murdering my George, John?" asked the wife as in a chat in front of a cup of tea:

—Because when I was held in Stratford Prison, your husband abused my wife!

And the delirious dialogue wandered like this for a good while like a Rimbaudian "*drunk boat*", before the bewildered eyes and the dumbfounded ears of the Court, the Jury and a good part of the population of the village. The next day, seeing her sister coming for a visit, Phœbe burst into tears:

—I know... I've told too many lies... But yesterday I absolutely tell you the whole truth and I'll stick to it!

—But you told so many contradictories and lies that everybody believe you guilty.

—I guess I'm going to have to suffer for this... I suppose they are going to hang me!

She was probably waiting to be reassured, but her versions were so implausible that her sister could only shake her head fatalistically, opening her hands in sign of impotence. For his part, John McWain denied all of Phœbe's statements and more particularly the more or less forced liaison that George was supposed to having had with his wife during his own stay in jail.



On August 18th, Phœbe and John McWain were confronted to each other under the critical eyes of the jurors. Obviously, Phœbe now only accused John in the hope of saving her young and handsome lover Thomas Coyle. To save one, she did not hesitate to condemn the other to a dreadful death by brutally imputing the horrible crime to him. John McWain calmly asked her what made her lie so much. The young woman replied on another scale:

—My husband had gone to split firewood for your "little lady" and he told me he had practically slept with her.

"*Practically!*" What did this adverb mean? Had fornication "*been or not been?*", as would have proclaimed it the Italian John Florio, better known under the pseudonym of *Shakespeare* by its well struck formulas. *That was the question!*

—Phœbe, by your false testimony under oath, you are ruining my life! muttered McWain discouraged.

—You know damn well you did it, John! There's no need to deny it, she replied with an air that wanted to be disappointed and convincing. *You might be able to fool your*

human brothers on earth, but you can never deceive the Lord, up there!

Good ! Now, after having the victim herself, her own husband, testified in her favor, God also stepped up to save her head! It involved the Lord in Person! How dare we suspect her of being a comedian and a scamp after that?

—I think it's you who should repent, said McWain, outraged at so much self-righteousness.

A witness described the position of the mutilated body of the victim when the neighbors were finally able to observe the scene of the crime at the first light of dawn:

—George was lying on the ground, on his back, his head towards the gate. His feet disappeared under the bed. His face, or what remained, was turned to the left in an immense pool of blood. The bloody axe lay next to the body and a pistol appeared under his shoulder. The right hand, red with blood, seemed almost severed. Large puddles of sticky blood smeared the little bed thumb, on wheels, on which the kid slept. The big bed seemed a little less stained, with the exception of one of the pillows.

Doctor Charles Moore who had made the findings initial statements stated:

—The heaviest axe blows seem to have been worn while the victim was out of bed, lying on the floor. The head was mush after 6 or 7 backstrokes of an axe... The skull, fractured, remained gaping. the brain appeared bare... The precision of the blows indicated that they could not have been given in total darkness... There must have been a fierce fight before the ground was stained with blood because the soles of the victim's feet had remained clean... The right wrist wore a deep cut that rendered the arm

unusable... The fore left arm also showed bloody cracks... The large cut to the throat had been inflicted at the time he was dying... The whole room was totally stained. The blood covered every surface...

According to all the witnesses who marched in the morning, it was real butchery: the blood smeared the logs walls, the underside of the roof and, of course, the floor, the furniture's, beds. The axe left next to the corpse was all sticky with blood mixed with hair, fragments of brain and cranial bone of the old man. George Campbell's mustache long hairs were sticking out of an axe notch made in the wood of the door; nearby with a bloody handprint. The dying husband had stood there trying to catch his breath. Clothes that hung on the walls were similarly stained splashes. A saucer of salt had become moistened with fluid.

Everything was red except the soles of the victim's feet, repeated the pathologist, while the floor was wholely smeared with blood. This either indicated that *there was not had a fight*, claimed some investigators; or, that the fight had taken place before the ground was soiled. The part of the bed usually occupied by Phœbe hadn't been unmade. The other half, in great disorder, was George's place. Which showed that the husband was well in his bed but that his wife was fibbing. She hadn't been yet in bed at the time of the assassination, like she had claimed so.

During this horrible demonstration, Phœbe kept fiercely with her head in her hands as if to protect herself from the rain of guilt that flooded her. On the third day of trial, the audience felt that she was sinking into the despondency of having to die and into the anguish of the Afterlife with its procession diabolically perverse of punishments. She probably felt the noose tightening irresistibly

around her neck of graceful swan. She hid more and more her face in a handkerchief as if to refuse to contemplate the macabre perspective of her beautiful young woman's body, Symbol of Life, suspended like a lamentable rag.

As for the marital relationship of this couple Campbell, almost everyone agreed that the two spouses usually presented the appearance of a quite cordial agreement. Each manifested the greatest respect for the other; at least until the assassination. Phœbe and her husband were sweet, pleasant people, respectful, who worked hard for the welfare of their family. How could such a sweet and peaceful person had she been able to switch in a few hours to criminal madness? Only passionate love and bubbling irresistible concupiscence had been able to unbalance her spirit and took hold of the young woman to the point of causing her to capsize and sink into such dementia of perversion.

It was scary! Everyone in the audience felt challenged for a moment and even probably threatened by asking the crucial question to try to discern if his or her nice spouse could not in the same way fall madly in love with another person and switch to criminal horror. George and his wife Phœbe had, for some time, resided in the paternal house and everything was fine between them. The one and only point of disagreement, we learned, came from a certain IOU (an acknowledgment of debt) that Mr. Campbell-senior had signed his son George for a work that the latter had done in his favor, and that he couldn't afford to pay cash.

However, he had issued the receipt to the order of his son *only*, and this receipt had become in an instant a real *talisman of discord* which had suddenly awakened the frustrations of Phœbe and poisoned peaceful coexistence

within the couple. On one occasion, Phœbe even had exploded into a real outburst of anger. To calm her down, the father-in-law had promised that he would annex this document to his will for the sole and exclusive benefit of Phœbe. The idea had greatly satisfied his daughter-in-law, but it had enraged his other children. No doubt to their request, the father-in-law then began to compile some food expenses for his son who had helped him, for the obvious purpose of subsequently deducting the sums from the annex.

Annoyed by the subterfuge, Phœbe had then insisted that the debt be paid *in cash* and *immediately*; in vain. The stepfather did not have the means...for now. Deep in his heart, George would have liked to return this service to his father *for free*. But, faced with the impetuous and persistent rage of his wife, he had decided to discreetly return to his father the famous IOU, subject of the whole dispute; without mentioning it to his wife, of course. So, he had effectively returned the precious document a few days before the murder. Phœbe had probably learned it... and an uncontrollable rage had then made her sink in murderous madness.

Some selfish people who are too dominant, tyrannical even, can't tolerate the slightest detail not be subject to their absolute control, according to their will. It was probably not the love madness that had triggered the drama, but rather the frustrated despotism. People with a temper are formidable manipulators to whom only other manipulators know how to resist.



It was thus that, on May 18th, Phœbe wrote a new version of her confession, in which she attributed, this

time, the responsibility of all their marital difficulties to her in-laws who hosted them. According to her, George had always given her in-laws priority and favor without discernment. He had worked for them, had been badly paid without protest. It was both frustrating and intolerable!

The handsome young apprentice Thomas Coyle, who lived also with them, had, it seems, been only a simple instrument to satisfy her hatred and carry out her revenge. She had enslaved the teenager to her will by granting him all the lustful pleasures of the flesh she then refused to her recalcitrant husband.

Seeing that Phœbe seemed the unhappiest women in her family environment, Coyle felt sorry for her and she knew how to develop in the heart of this teenager compassion for the victim she claimed to be, that he might lend her a merciful shoulder. The compassion of this child had immediately turned into passion when she had made known to him the rich pleasures of the flesh; all the irresistible pleasures invented by the Creator to enslave human beings and force them to involuntarily populate the wide world; until the day when cunning humans invented contraceptives that allowed them to lick the honey and leave the toast¹². Subjugated by voluptuousness, the young boy had then proposed to her (according to her), to "*help her get rid of her husband so they can live together*" free and happy.

As specified above, they discussed at length to work out the best strategy in order to liquidate this troublesome old husband. Under the dumbfounded eyes of the

¹² Providence avenged itself by causing these peoples to disappear from the map of the world. They were unable to maintain a satisfactory birth rate for the sole purpose of surviving. The other peoples, too many, also disappeared, in wars for living space.

audience, the ins and outs of this horrible crime were made evident. Thanks to the new version of Phœbe, and to the pieces of the puzzle skillfully assembled by the police and by the Crown Prosecutor, the Thorndalois began to reconstitute the story of this extraordinary assassination.



The deadly evening had started as usual, at least for the victim. George Campbell read the Bible following his habit, and pondered it for a while. Ah! If he had known that he was so close to the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, perhaps then he would have faced Paradise differently! That done, he calmly talked with Phœbe for a few minutes before bed. Sitting and mending some clothes in the dim light of an oil lamp. She answered him peacefully too. How can we exchange ideas with a person we are preparing to slaughter as soon as he closes his eye?

Shortly after eleven o'clock, when the old husband was entering his first and deepest sleep, Phœbe perceived a signal coming from the darkness of the night. She went out to find her lover who was waiting for her. He was very emotional with the Colt in hand (without a firing pin). They argued for a while about who should shoot the sleeping old man. She pretended she was afraid to miss him and cause the old man to wake up untimely. It was better that he put him to death himself. Coyle, armed with the pistol without a firing pin, had finally found the courage to enter his mistress' cabin.

Fearing that the gun gets jammed, and that the huge George, who was fifteen good centimeters taller than him, did wake up, the teenager asked Phœbe to prepare the lumberjack's axe and butcher's cutlass. The use of the knife confirmed the diagnosis of Dr. Moore who had sensed that

the cutlass had been used at the end of the massacre to finish off the victim by slitting his throat, with the ultimate goal of making sure with certainty of the death of the old man who could not thus become a Prosecution witness against the killer.

Before Phœbe's eyes, Coyle aimed at the barely detectable head of the old man who was peacefully in his first and last sleep, thinking no doubt of some biblical scene of the Old Testament. But, of course, the pistol got jammed (how could it have been otherwise without a firing pin?) and George moved as if he was about to wake up. So, Phœbe handed to a terrified Coyle, fearing that the victim would wake up and get up, the axe she was holding ready. The teenager hit the man with two blows from the back of the axe, but the colossus still manages to stand and grab the axe. The two seized it and tried to tear it away as if in a nightmare:

—My poor husband and Coyle then fought through the whole room in a fight to the death, sobbed Phœbe.

To everyone's amazement, she poured real tears of bitterness and contrition... most certainly of regrets getting caught.

But the fight to the death suddenly turned to the advantage of George. The situation was becoming tragic for the young killer, horrified. Panicked, he asked his mistress to prevent the old man from using this terrible weapon against him. So, Phœbe grabbed the handle and stopped the axe with all her weight, with all her strength. Coyle yelled at her to pass him the large butcher's cutlass. She took the knife with her free hand:

—Coyle took it from my hand and slit the throat of my poor husband who fell on the ground!



The crime accomplished, Coyle disappeared in the night. George was dying on the ground. His wife waited more than an hour before calling for help so that every trace of life, every palpitation, his last breath, had disappeared from the still hot corpse. She did not want him to be rescued at all and to be able to testify against her. She ended her written confession with these words:

—I did and said many things when I was a prisoner of this love passion. But I don't blame anyone but myself, because I was a married woman, and I should have behaved better. I deserve to be punished as much as Thomas Coyle, and perhaps even more, because I told lies, and even accused an innocent man.

No! Her sense of regret did not go so far as to absolve the boy she had dragged into her crime. Another innocent was her cousin John McWain to whom she had previously tried to cast the blame to save her alleged lover Coyle. But, in fact, had Coyle really been involved in this crime? Some axe blows in the logs of the walls were so deeply embedded that it had necessarily taken a very vigorous killer; but Phœbe was precisely a very robust person... muscularly speaking... but not only! Most observers bet that she could do so. Most observers, of course... but so did the jurors... and they decided in less than an hour of deliberation that Phœbe was, without any possible doubt, the one and only murderer.

Moreover, Phœbe had lied so much throughout the investigation and trial, that the young lover was later cleared of any accusation. She lied not only to justify herself, but to intimidate and discredit the investigators. Thus, in retaliation against the policeman Harry Phair who had

carried out her arrest to interrogate her, at the very beginning of the investigation, Phœbe, who did not hesitate to terrorize those who defied her inflexible will, had even accused him of attempted rape during their journey to London by horse-drawn carriage. The complaint was duly registered but quickly abandoned afterwards in the face of the extraordinary accumulation of inconceivable lies that could only have been invented by a mythomaniac imagination.

Phœbe's credibility had suffered so much that, as we have said above, the most complete doubt saved Thomas Coyle's head, all the more easily since he appeared to the jury to be only a young teenager still beardless¹³, whom she had subjugated by means of her voluptuous body, and who obeyed her like a submissive automaton. It is certain that the policeman Phair, whom Phœbe had had the recklessness to accuse of rape on herself, must have ensured that the young woman could not harm others, even perhaps to the point of exonerating a culprit, perhaps to the detriment of human Justice itself.

The popular favor, which the young woman had enjoyed at the beginning of the investigation, within a significant part of the population of this region, had fallen like a failed soufflé. Indeed, to save her head, she had too often changed versions, showing an imagination reminiscent of that of an oracle of Delphi, in Ancient Greece, who was aptly named *Phébé* (Φοίβη). The rest of the public's sympathy in favor of the widow then sank into implacable hatred because her invention of the two black burglars had been imagined by her, only to conceal her adultery with a teenager. Among these proletarians with a mind soaked in

¹³ ●According to the very description of the one who had sold him the unusable gun.

Victorian morality¹⁴ as much as local cervoise, that seemed the worst of perversions.



Hearing the inevitable guilty verdict, Phœbe remained totally unmoved until the judge pronounced the *death sentence* in the absolute silence of the courtroom. Perhaps she hoped, by displaying calm and submissiveness, that the judge would be more lenient. However, it was without hesitation that the supreme magistrate pronounced the ritual formula:

"On June 20, 1872, you will be hanged by the neck until death ensues!"

Then the young woman began to scream, shout, moan and complain "*pitifully*," said the present journalists, unconcerned to grant her the slightest mercy. Let us be careful not to throw any stone at her, for if we ourselves were condemned to imminent death, we might seem more lamentable than Phœbe. Of course, we are all condemned to death, but we do not know the date, so the Camarde can approach us with great discretion, at wolf steps, and surprise us in our bed, or slaughter us on the corner of a dark street under the sharp knife of a bloodthirsty thief.

¹⁴ •Despite the fact that Queen Victoria did not hate to be inspired by the hundreds of positions of the *Kama Sutra* to vary Hindu pleasures with her lover, after the death of her dear husband. Queen Victoria ennobled Sir Richard Francis Burton who translated the *Kama Sutra* into English from the French version.



As the day of execution approached, Phœbe was more resigned to her tragic Fate. Eventually, the imminence of the execution caused a brutal spiritual tumble in her mind when she realized that no procrastination, no lie, no fake tear would hold back the scissors of the old *Atropos*¹⁵ who was preparing to cut the thread of her existence. She then declared herself "*happy with her fate as a death row inmate who would very soon expiate her crime and appear before the Supreme Judge.*" She even went through the limbo of holy prayer, of interminable orations, and even celestial hymns of praise cooed with a gentle head voice.

In spite of all the spiritual subterfuges by which she veiled her despair at times, the last days of her life seemed to be pressing ahead, as if to make her suffer further. The executioner finally arrived from Toronto, with his eternal little suitcase containing the sinister hoods that had hidden so many grimaces of agony, and, the terrifying ropes, those ropes that haunted the nights of the condemned, undulating like poisonous snakes.

During the day, the hangman directed the erection of the scaffold. At night, he slept in a double-locked cell, the only place where he felt safe. Besides, he kept his name absolutely secret. Even the prison-guards kept their distance, as did the staff. One of them, Roger Duguay, wrote that¹⁶, upon seeing the hangman, "the reaction of the staff

¹⁵ •According to the mythological religion of the ancient Greeks, the Three Parques were deities, mistresses of the Destiny of women and men.

¹⁶ •Duguay, 1979, p.43. Even if the era is not Roger Duguay's, humans remain much the same in the face of similar problems.

was about the same as that of a peaceful walker who finds a viper on his way."

As for the inmates, needless to say what their feelings were when they saw such a character appear. They expressed their hatred, at mealtimes, "spitting into his plates and defiling his food¹⁷." Some cooks or not very delicate marmitons did not even hesitate, in extreme cases, to add ... their seed.

The Executor of the High Works erected the gallows in the courtyard of the prison¹⁸ in Middlesex County, London, Ontario. It could be seen from nearby buildings. The back of the gallows was hidden by planks. As soon as the scaffold was erected, the executioner carefully checked the proper functioning of his machine "to see if the hatch was playing well, and if it opened to the signal; he hung a sand bag, repeatedly. The noise that the hatch made, opening and closing, put the inmates out of themselves¹⁹. Was it a secret revenge on the part of this man who felt unjustly despised by all? Everyone was deeply convinced of this.

¹⁷ • Ibid. p.44. The kitchens usually worked with inmates. The final commentary on the paragraph is a personal memory of the author of this work who occupied, in another life, this kind of function.

¹⁸ • There were 11 people hanged at the Middlesex County Jail. On December 29th, 1868, Thomas Jones who had assaulted his 12-year-old niece Mary Jones. On December 28th, 1871, Cyrus Pickard (20 years old) for the murder of Duncan McVannell. On June 20th, 1872, Mrs. Phoebe Campbell for the murder of her husband George Campbell. On November 27th, 1885, Benjamin Simmonds who had murdered Mary Ann Stokes. June 14th, 1890 Henry Smith, for the murder of his wife Lucy Smith. On May 17th, 1899, Marion 'Peg Leg' Brown, for killing police officer Michael Toohey. On April 10th, 1924, Sidney Ernest Murrell, 26, for the murder of Russell Campbell. On April 10th, 1924, Clarence Topping (23 years old) who had murdered Geraldine Durston (love trio). On April 26th, 1932, Wallace Ramesbottom (18), who had murdered Samuel Weinstein. On April 26th, 1932, Henry Quinn (36), who had murdered the same Samuel Weinstein to rob him. On June 5th, 1951, Walter George Rowe (29) who had murdered Clare Galbraith. The Ontario Middlesex County Jail was closed in 1972.

¹⁹ Ibidem.



On Thursday, June 20th, 1872, the day of the execution, Phœbe Campbell, wrote a very final confession in which she asked God for forgiveness for her inexpressible crime, and urged her fellow sisters and brothers not to give in to sin. What hadn't she thought of earlier!

Shortly after 8:00 a.m. on that quiet morning, the young woman left her cell and walked to her death with a firm and determined step, without any hesitation. She clutched in her hand a handkerchief embroidered with some field flowers. Journalists who hated her for all her lies [they don't like competition!] portrayed her as a "sickless killer" and wrote that she "walked towards the scaffold without a trace of emotion." They probably wished she had indulged in humiliating implorations. But Phœbe remained full of dignity.

Despite these negative comments, she knelt on the hatch for a final prayer to God in order to prepare for her now so close arrival. She finally got up. A bird sang insistently; perhaps to wish her a bon voyage beyond the white trails of a cirrus, up there in the sky.

The executioner put the hood on her, stared at the rope, and then pulled on the shutter release. But here again and according to his habit, he had overdosed with spirit the arrival of the sun, probably to give himself the courage to coldly kill his human sisters. As a result, the size and especially the weight of the victim had been miscalculated. The rope, a little too long, made the feet of Phœbe touch the ground at the end of the fall. Her knees bent as if in a final imploration, and his head bowed forward, as if for a last silent prayer. It was precisely 8:30 in the morning.

The hundred or so guests, many of them journalists, who sat silently in the courtyard of the Middlesex County Jail were moved to see that. When the rope was cut, Phœbe still held in her clenched hand the small handkerchief embroidered with field flowers.

The bird goes away, the leaf falls,

Love goes out, because it's winter.

Little bird, come to my grave

Chant when the tree will be green! ²⁰



This disastrous story could have –and should have– ended here, but voices were raised to remind everyone that Phœbe probably had a young accomplice, and that he should perhaps also be judged.

On October 2nd, 1872, more than three months after his mistress had joined her husband in a place that everyone imagines according to his beliefs, Thomas Coyle was finally charged with complicity in murder and presented on October 7th, 1872 before a Court of Assizes presided over by Judge John Hagarty. That day, it was raining cats and dogs. The main witness, the one who had sold the revolver to Thomas Coyle, was unable to identify him without hesitation; or at least, knowing that his opinion was going to send the teenager to the gallows, he pretended this time not to recognize him with certainty.

As for the second Prosecution witness (THE GLOBE reporter), he claimed that he had lost his notebook in which he had recorded the conversations between Phœbe

²⁰ • *The comedy of death*. Poem by Théophile Gautier who died that same year 1872.

and Thomas. He tried to describe "from memory" all the conversations he overheard, but Defense attorney David Glass was very clever in showing the jurors that his client's memory was failing. Glass also pointed out that, in the unlikely event that Thomas Coyle was really guilty, he was just a naïve teenager who had been manipulated by feelings and sensuality.

The cunning Counsel also pulled out of his sleeves a surprise witness, Mary Springtead, who had in July 1871 shared Phœbe's cell. Upon her release, Mary had managed to pass on a letter from Phœbe to her so-called accomplice, Thomas Coyle. The latter had frankly refused to read the letter, claiming that he had nothing to do with her.

The policeman Phair also said that when he wanted to arrange Thomas' visit to Phœbe's cell, Thomas had long opposed it. All of this was far from exculpatory evidence in Coyle's favor, but it was presented as such. Eventually, Judge Hagarty, who also seemed to lean in favor of the accused, probably influenced the jurors who in less than an hour gave a verdict of *not guilty*.

So, Thomas Coyle fortunately saved his head! He immediately boarded the first sailing ship bound to return to his native England and never come back.



Every year since 2005, as part of an *Open House Day*, in *The Lost Soul Stroll*, the city of London (Ontario)—in need of celebrity and tourist attractions—celebrates with pomp the woman that local feminist nicknamed the "*Jack the Ripper of Canada*" in the person of Phœbe Campbell. The Canadian Feminist Movement made her famous for killing her husband. This unusual celebrity

A long howl in the Night

must, without any doubt, make smile old George, all slashed with scars, who has sunk into total oblivion among these Londonians of Ontario. Who said crime doesn't pay?

And then, an *Open House Day in a prison*, isn't it already a sure sign of Canadian humor?



-2-

The deadly *ménage-à-trois*

The Cordélia-Viau-Poirier murder case, 1899

Cordélia Poirier, née Viau, was a happy woman because she had not capped Sainte-Catherine, a custom now obsolete, intended to force women to marry and procreate before 25 years¹. At the age of 24, she had seized a 40-year-old man. When we know that human longevity at the end of the nineteenth century was only 45 years, and that women remained minors until the age of 25, we realize that this marriage must have surprised the village of Sainte-Scholastique, now disappeared under the tombstone, sorry! under the concrete runway of the magnificent but useless Montreal-Mirabel International Airport².

In 1891, her husband Isidore bathed in his 46 winters while Cordélia lined up only 30 springs. Marriage had been for Cordélia a true *gift of Isis*³: the gift of Freedom

¹ • Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a very pious and learned young woman, had not found a man modest enough to marry a woman who would be superior to him. She therefore remained a virgin until her death and the Christian tradition, anxious to populate the earth, used her image to push young girls to find husband before the age of 25, under penalty of "capping St. Catherine" (remaining an old maid) or becoming a nun. The first option was a ridiculous crowning achievement for the young girls left behind by men. Curious custom today swept away by the tsunami of libertine education, by feminism, and by generalized concubinage.

² • The Montreal International Airport was built by order of the federal government of Pierre E. Trudeau for fabulous sums. Thousands of farmers were expropriated at low prices and ruined. When the airport was finished, the airlines refused to obey Trudeau and leave Dorval. In gratitude for this weakness unworthy of a responsible government, Dorval International Airport was named Pierre E. Trudeau International Airport.

³ • Allusion to the etymology of Isidore which means "gift of Isis." When her husband (and brother) was murdered, the goddess Isis, wife of her brother Osiris, shed all the tears from her eyes. According to the tradition, that was the cause of the annual flood of the Nile. Water is a condition of freedom in Egypt.

that had granted her autonomy in an era when women were never free to choose their lives. Gerontophilia is looking for much older partners for a wide variety of reasons. It can be for the experience, the calm of those people who have had time to live and who find themselves available, ready to listen to the other.

The reassuring aspect of the elderly person is often decisive. Cordélia was not particularly pretty and a marriage to a man from an earlier generation left her with the satisfaction of being revered as a medieval princess despite the ingratitude of her physical appearance. It was not a distant complex of Electra⁴ who had lured Cordélia Viau into a gerontophilic relationship by making her marry Isidore Poirier, an austere old man with a disturbing beard, sixteen years her senior. No young person of her age had felt the desire to court her.

An awful psoriasis had until then forced her to take refuge in an irreproachable virtue. Never had a man been able to see the slightest bit of her skin, especially that soiled with stigmata, and Cordélia had carved out in the Precambrian rock of the Laurentians a reputation for modesty and virtue as solid as the Rocher de Bonaventure in Gaspésie.

So, it was no mere coincidence that the old boy Isidore Poirier had wanted to unite his own solitude with that of the young woman. It was above all this inviolable modesty that resided in Isidore. It appeared to him as the guarantee of the infallibility of the conjugal bond, an indestructible assurance that their two souls would remain in the *Way of the Lord*, a bumpy and bitter path, but which had the merit of leading straight to Paradise. His path

⁴ • So called not by Freud but by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961).

would be rough and arduous, but what Isidore did not know was that, by this matrimonial choice, his wife would bring him Paradise, but not Paradise on Earth,... the real one, the one to which we all aspire, but the later possible.

Isidore would not even be able to know the twentieth century that the inhabitants of the Laurentians saw approaching with curiosity. Each being is a mystery all the more opaque that we are not able to know ourselves. Cordélia was not the tender wife she would have wanted to appear.



*Cordélia Viau,
The mastermind of the crime.*

She remembered with holy horrors her *home economics* classes given by the Montreal Grey Sisters: "Listen to him [your husband] when he comes home from work. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but his arrival at home is not the right time for that. Let him speak first. Remember that his topics of conversation are more important than yours. Make sure that the evening belongs to him... Never question

his judgment or integrity. Remember that he is the master of the home and that as such he always exercises his will with justice and honesty... Make sure you don't bore him by talking to him, because women's interests are often quite insignificant compared to men's."

Most of the girls were boiling with irritation when they heard these infamous words. Some had even protested. But the nuns had brushed aside the criticisms with a single sentence: "*This is God's will!*" Why, then, did God's will pass through the mouths of those dilapidated

monks, confirmed bachelor, for whom the only two women worthy of the name were their own mother and the Virgin Mary? And these old, archaic, and even outdated clerics thought they were allowed to enter areas and provide guidance in matters relating to subjects they were supposed to ignore:

"As far as intimate relations with your husband are concerned, it is important to remind you of your marriage vows and in particular your obligation to obey. If he feels he needs to sleep immediately, so be it. In all things, be guided by your husband's wishes and do not, in any way, pressure him to provoke or stimulate an intimate relationship. If your husband suggests mating, then accept with humility while keeping in mind that the pleasure of a man is more important than that of a woman. When he reaches orgasm, a small moan on your part will encourage him and will be quite enough to indicate any form of pleasure you may have felt⁵." How the psyche of a Canadian Woman – even if she was not yet a hard Québécoise – could not explode with revolt under this psychological burqa?

By marrying Isidore, Cordélia, who had hitherto lacked self-confidence, had thus chosen this way of being transformed into a revered princess. If she had married a boy of her age, her life would certainly not have been so sweet and her death so atrocious at the end of a rope of Indian hemp, a material whose use usually leads to the antechamber of the Afterlife.



From the beginning of their marriage, the old Isidore devoted to her little woman a boundless adoration and

⁵ • Absolutely authentic text. Book of piety of the young girl at the boarding school and in her family (*Livre de piété de la jeune-fille au pensionnat et dans sa famille*), Aubanel Frères Éditeurs, Avignon, 1862. 847 pages.

sought to satisfy all her whims. Now we know that the vase of desires has no more bottom than the barrel of the Danaïdes and that it cannot be filled. If Cordélia had had to earn her money, she would have understood that she had to limit her ambitions to her material means. But marriage had conferred idleness on her... As she hated to clean up, Isidore took care of it in his spare time. This saved his wife from psoriasis rashes (she claimed) and even more eruptive frustrations. Isidore's long life of celibacy had also accustomed him to cooking. He continued, considering himself perfectly happy that a woman had simply thrown at him and his black beard the slightest mark of interest. In a couple, the harmonious development of both is exceptionally rare. If it is not one that outrageously takes advantage of the other, it is the other.



The old Isidore Poirier, victim of the conspiracy. Priv.Coll.

When both feel unable to fully develop, it seems optimal for the fairness of effort and sacrifice. The split is an unstable balance in which the selfishness and narcissism of one must be filled by the generosity of the other. Otherwise, it is failure. "What I like most about people, it's their generosity!" they say, without realizing that they are revealing their own vice.

Isidore was so subject to the whims of his idolized wife that she took the opportunity to buy a new house built in the nearby town of Saint-Canut where Cordélia was not known as in Sainte-Scolastique. It

is sometimes good to get a new look, especially when the reputation is not at the height of ambitions. A few months later, the couple moved into their new home at the corner of Rue Principale and Côte Saint-Colomban. Then it was necessary to furnish the house with new furniture, and then the wardrobe had to be renewed. Isidore's budget was still in the scarlet red.

Cordélia agreed to work on the condition that she could choose her profession. She decided to practice the profession she had learned at the convent: seamstress⁶. She specialized in... men's trousers. Guess why! Many rumors in this time used to run about the profession of seamstress, at least those who were equipped with a sewing machine, because this kind of instrument was considered an infernal machine for the feminine Virtue. "The shaking of the pedal, in its back and forth movement, impresses on the lower part of the trunk, the frictional movement of the *labia majora* on the *labia minora*, and the resulting heat frequently causes onanism⁷." The sewing machine became an instrument of perdition⁸.

Cordélia quickly acquired a remarkable dexterity to indent a fly or to bevel a pocket. So much so that, moved by hearsay, gentlemen began to flock not only from the village of Saint-Canut but from all the county. There was no shortage of work for either of them, so Isidore had to hire a young apprentice carpenter, to whom Cordélia asked to do the housework she was reluctant to perform. The new

⁶ •The first truly functional sewing machine was in 1830. The patent had been filed by a Lyonnais named Barthélémy Thimonnier, to manufacture uniforms for the French Army.

⁷ •Diane Ducret, *La chair interdite*, Albin Michel, 2014.

⁸ •This is in any case what Dr. Thésée Pouillet assures in his *Essai médico-philosophique sur les formes, les causes, les signes, les conséquences et le traitement de l'onanisme chez la femme*, Éditions A., 1876. Delahaye. (the text is quoted by Diane Ducret, p.80.)

servant was a beautiful young man named Samuel Parslow.

While the wolf entered the sheepfold, Cordélia wanted to get in tune. She began to wear makeup, forgetting the directives of the old Catholic canons that castigated women with these words: "The desire to please is in itself a source of sin, especially when it is by *adjustment* that one wants to please⁹." Although better off in the narrow morals of the time, men were not totally spared. The Catholic canons advised to keep in mind a reserve of old "weapons" to draw in case of imperative temptations: "Think of your mother or your sister; it is one of the surest safeguards against guilty thoughts!" they advised in the secret of the confessional, to men and boys whose Virtue was dangerously besieged at the sight of moving legs or an overly expressive bodice.

Isidore no longer even needed to spoil Cordélia in clothes of all kinds and in various jewels. She took care of it very well herself, so much so that the budget of the Poirier family was under the weather. The carpentry did not provide enough resources. Far from it. So, they had to grasp the nettle. Isidore went into exile in California in the hope of finding gold. Gold mining was running at full speed in the Grass Valley nestled at the foot of the Sierra Nevada. Isidore was spoilt for choice since the Klondike and the Canadian Rockies were also crowded by gold miners armed with gold panning packs. Unfortunately, his dear wife stubbornly refused to follow him there.

⁹ •According to *the Dictionary of the French Academy*, the word "*adjustment*" meant in this archaic sense: the fact of bringing care to her toilet; in other words makeup and coquetry. Book of piety of the young girl at the boarding school and in her family, Aubanel Frères Éditeurs, Avignon, 1862. 847 very curious pages.

So, Isidore went into exile alone, morale at its lowest, and stayed there for two interminable years that were not really successful, because Cordélia knew how to align her expenses far beyond their income. Despite this, Isidore persisted in wanting to refloat the family ship that was embarking water from all sides. He wanted to find gold in order to fill the barrel of the Danaïdes that his marriage had become. In the region, gossip flew as low as mosquitoes in stormy weather. Father Pinault of Saint-Canut and Samuel Parslow's mother did not know what to say and what to do to untie this Gordian knot before it had strangled someone.

Priv. Coll. The lover,

Samuel Parslow.



Harassed by loneliness, the young and intelligent Cordélia, who thus had many hobbies to furnish, organized a literary salon during which literature was discussed, popular songs hummed, and poems declaimed. In the village, the ditch of gossip has swollen into a river. The chatter swelled to such an extent that Cordélia had to exercise some caution. The muse began to signal to her secret visitors when the way was clear: a bedside lamp in the window signaled to her dear sweethearts that they could show up at one of the three doors of the residence without risking jostling another visitor of the night.

Moreover, the new house had three doors, on three sides of the building. These three doors later made Queen Victoria's Prosecutor think that Cordélia had matured and

premeditated her plan of debauchery long before. At the time, we called debauchery and turpitude what today is called freedom of expression and thawing of Virtue. But, despite this vigilant caution, it was difficult to hide from neighbors, especially in this time without radio or television. The only interesting adventures always took place in the neighboring houses. So, the stealth shadows were carefully catalogued by the neighbors, faithful and circumspect guardians of the Virtue of others.

Unable to put pressure on Cordélia who, far ahead of her time, cared little for the opinion of the Clergy, Father Pinault took her best pen to write to Isidore, in order to let him know that his wife was in danger. And he too, of course! But, paradoxically, instead of considering the warning of the clergyman as a credible advice, Poirier, whose spirit was still rooted in the passionate veneration of the first days, was outraged to find that the parish priest was the spokesman for the gossip of the small town barely bigger than a village. He immediately sent the letter of denunciation to his wife, advising her to retaliate against the priest, for example by refusing to hold the parish harmonium on Sundays. But Cordélia "devoted" herself to this task only because this high office flattered her vanity, and not to render service to the priest she hated. She loved to modulate *Ropartz's Kyrie* or *Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle*. Her fingers shaped the raw and frivolous sound into delicate harmonies as the hand of the potter gracefully tames the trivial clay. In fact, she only acquiesced to her last advice. He ended his letter with these candid words: "*Do whatever you can to get un-bored!*" She worked tirelessly on it.

Each of Cordélia's letters was a perpetual request for money. Isidore sent what he could —and even more— but never satisfied her.

—I'm going to make my own way to send you as much money as I can from Fresno. If I can find someone to lend me, I'll send you as soon as possible. I only make two dollars a day, and when I paid my pension of \$4.50 [a week], you can see that it's not going very fast. I'm going to find a room to feed myself... It discourages me to have so much debt to pay, life-insurance, sewing machine, and life-insurance again. You see, it's enough to discourage a man. If it continues, I won't be able to leave in the spring and all this will make me bored even more. And to make me even sadder, to see all this jealous people around you that makes you feel sad... Don't forget to respond to the one who lives for you and cries for the woman he loves and will always love...

His childish innocence made him a definite victim of his partner's narcissistic selfishness.



In 1897, disappointed by California, whose money, which was thought to be easy money could not break through Cordélia Viau-Poirier's mountain of debts, Isidore returned to Montreal to look for work. As soon as he got a job, in August 1897, Cordélia began to harass him to send her his *entire* salary:

—I would like you to please me [Sic!], because you know that it is necessary to force a good blow to get out of the hole... Well, my dear, as soon as you have the pay, you'll send it to me, and Modeste can wait for your pension for he gets his pay every week... but there will come a day perhaps for me when I shall not cry...

The last sentence of the quote should have caused concern in the mind of Poirier. The eyes and the heart veiled by his burqa of devouring passion; he saw no cause for apprehension. He is certain that Cordélia had been

plotting for several months already machination which would bring her the fortune... or the scaffold. In fact, it was the scaffold and the rope!

For a long time already, since his stay in California, Isidore Poirier had been writing about the Life Insurance policies that Cordélia had made him take out. She had forced him, in California, to take out an initial life insurance policy for \$1,000. As soon as he was settled in Montreal, she asked him to subscribe a second life insurance policy for the same coverage, always in her favor. But worried about whether she would receive the money in the event of an assassination, she asked the insurance agent himself, Émile Champagne:

—My husband asks what would happen if he should die any death, be killed in any accident, or be poisoned, or be killed by car, he wants to know everything...

And Cordélia specified later to discuss this problem *only with her*, because she was the one who took care of the family business:

—Answer me and then I will go and arrange with you because my husband cannot leave his work... If you come, don't say that I wrote to you.

Of course, the insurance agent understood immediately that the situation was becoming complex and perilous at the Poirier's home. He was one of the Prosecution witnesses.

As could be expected, the Montreal job failed in raising the finances of the couple. It seems that Cordélia then decided to precipitate events to solve the problem once and for all. She asked her husband back, to carry out her grand plan to start the Life Insurance fraud project, in which Isidore would be the unwitting star, the immolated goat whose death would bring fortune, happiness and

abundance to his dear wife. At the end of 1897, Isidore returned to live—to die, we should say—in the village of Saint-Canut. Then, in the spring, while Cordélia was working out the scenario of the assassination, he had to go and work in Saint-Jérôme where he participated in the construction of the magnificent cathedral which still exists. A true work of art.

Cordélia rented a room with a family in that city, officially to avoid too much travel, but, because it seemed more convenient to her being far from the scene of the crime when it was going to be committed in Saint-Canut. Mrs. Meunier, the owner of the rented room, soon realized that the couple she was hosting was unusual, to say the least, compared to the couples of the time. She felt an immediate distrust for Cordélia; probably after having noticed that the young wife spoke to her husband in an abrupt and even dictatorial way. A sensitive and curiously intuitive soul, Madame Meunier naturally registered in her memory—and perhaps even on paper—the slightest details, the briefest comings and goings of Cordélia, whom she began to watch closely. She became the main clerk and the most effective witness for the prosecution in the terrible assassination that followed these preliminaries.



On Friday, November 18th, Samuel Parslow, always in the pay of Mr. Poirier and at the orders of Madame, came to Saint-Jérôme to take the final instructions from his mistress. According to the criminal investigation, it was on that day that Cordélia gave him the signal to kill Isidore. Madame Meunier testified about three visits to Cordélia's home during that day alone. Very cautious, the lover remained outside, and it was Cordélia who went out

in spite of the bitter cold of the Laurentians. Unfortunately for them and fortunately for the investigation, their body language betrayed them. Their dialogues resembled the conciliabule of conspirators who are plotting an attack. Their nosy and tense eyes were surveying the surroundings as conspirators do, as the Prairie dogs on their hind legs. Their gestures were so excessive that a professional mime could not have better expressed the preparation of a murder.

That evening, when Isidore came back from work after a long day on the vast roof of the cathedral under construction¹⁰, in the cold wind of the Canadian Shield, his wife ordered him to take Samuel back to Saint-Canut, where the servant had orders to put him to death.

This way, she would be far from the scene of the murder, and no one could directly implicate her in the crime; at least, she thought so.

Exhausted from his day's work and eager to rest, her husband tried to procrastinate, to dodge, to refuse, but Cordélia raised her voice and Isidore had only to bow to her dictatorial will. Satisfied to have humiliated and defeated the old man by a few vociferations, Cordélia—who today would be described as a *perverted narcissist*—proudly turned towards the Meunier who were contemplating the scene, highly shocked, and exclaimed, in the presence of her husband who was getting up to go and harness the horse to the cart:

—*When I tell him something, he listens to me!*

¹⁰ • In fact, this church took the title of cathedral in 1951. The stained glass windows were made in France by renowned master glassworkers and the great organs were designed and created by the famous organ builders, the brothers Joseph and Samuel Casavant of Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec. Joseph had learned the trade in Versailles.

The two men —the assassin and the victim— left immediately. As soon as the horse started, Cordélia shouted to her husband in a peremptory tone of voice:

—*Sleep at Saint-Canut!...* where Samuel was to perform the execution the same evening.

The next morning, Cordélia appeared anxious and tense.

—*Madam, you seem very worried. Are you waiting for your husband?* asked Madame Meunier.

—*I don't think he's coming this morning,* Cordélia replied with half a smile, without thinking about what her sentence revealed.

But at 6:30 a.m., seeing her husband arrive who was on his way to work, she seemed surprised, upset and, full of frustration to see him still alive. She immediately went up to bed, without waiting for him to enter the house, when usually she was the one who prepared breakfast for him, according to the tradition of the time.

—*Usually, it was she who served him food,* commented Madame Meunier at the trial.

According to the ensuing investigation, Samuel Parslow had not found in him, that evening, enough determination to murder his boss. Which is to his credit! Isidore had come close to death. After being heavily reprimanded by Cordélia who threatened to interrupt their relationship, it was only the day after Sunday that Samuel was able to gather the necessary forces, or rather enough vileness and cowardice, to murder his boss during his sleep.

The investigation revealed that the two lovers had decided that the crime would be carried out with a cutlass (a large butcher's knife) to avoid alerting the neighbors by

the explosions of firearm. To this end, Samuel carefully sharpened a large knife that was used to kill the pig, each year on the Laurentian farms, to supply the delicatessen meat for each family's consumption.

On Saturday, November 19th, the Poiriers took the road to Saint-Canut, as they did every week because Cordélia wanted to play harmonium on Sunday Mass. It was her great moment of glory. She played it divinely well, and no one could have convinced her to abandon the project, even if this narcissistic pleasure forced her to be at the scene of the assassination when she should have moved away from it as much as possible. She could not give up this moment of glory even the day she had her Isidore murdered. This intense pleasure was going to cost her the gal-lows.

It was snowing lightly. The crazy flakes staked their cheeks of chills. The evening went well. Isidore garnered the tobacco harvest with Samuel Parslow while Cordélia browsed fashion magazines in the blatant glow of a white whale oil lamp¹¹. The next day everyone went to Mass; Madame to hold the harmonium, Samuel to chant in the parish choir, and Monsieur to... simply pray and listen with admiration to the beautiful sounds that sprang from the long fingers of his dear Cordélia.

However, at noon, Samuel refused to come to dine at the Poiriers' house as usual. He exceptionally preferred to go to his mother's house, who lived a few hundred meters away.

—*Why didn't he come with us for lunch?* had to ask Isidore to Cordélia who probably answered him with a question as

¹¹ • Belugas formerly called *porpoises* in Canada were hunted in the Gulf St. Lawrence. They are now called white Whales.

hypocrites usually do. They are convinced not to lie by this subterfuge.

—*How do you want me to know?*

How could Samuel have murdered him serenely in the afternoon if he had fraternized as a friend at noon? One can imagine that the meal was not the most graceful between Isidore and Cordélia, and one wonders what attitude she displayed in front of the old man who was living his last minutes. Did she think he wouldn't see the evening and that the sun would definitely set for him? Did she feel powerful to hold in her hands the key to his life, like Atropos, the third Parques of Mythology mentioned above, whose sharp scissors, were responsible for cutting the thread of human existence?

Isidore really had to blindly love his young wife not to see her as she was. Perhaps he took into account the guidelines used in the formation of young women at that time: "*Oh! What immense spiritual gain there is in dealing with people of execrable character, simply by putting up with them, day after day!*"¹² *Endure the unbearable; it was the surest way to Heaven.* It was precisely so for Isidore that evening!

Some people, unconcerned with objectivity and fairness, have tried to present Cordélia as a victim of her husband by denying the obvious with perverse bad faith. However, in this crime, this "evidence" was presented by a woman, Madame Bouvrette. It was this neighbor who recounted the chronology of the events of the afternoon

¹² •Book of piety of the young girl at the boarding school and in her family (*Livre de piété de la jeune-fille au pensionnat et dans sa famille*), Aubanel Frères Éditeurs, Avignon, 1862. 847 pages

with a plethora of details that made the Prosecutor of Queen Victoria infinitely pleased.

Madame Bouvrette seemed passionate about this "soap opera" because she had already been able to follow several episodes, for example when Isidore was in California or Montréal, and when Samuel and the other fervent admirers came to make discreet nocturnal visits to their muse. Very often, the night visitors, too ardent and too impatient, dispensed the first marks of gallantry to Cordélia before disappearing into the anonymity of the house. Madame Bouvrette perhaps imagined the rest with a touch of jealousy. Who knows?

Let's listen carefully to Madame Bouvrette's voice detailing the chronology of this final Sunday afternoon, so unusual in spite of appearances, as she did on the witness stand, in the courtroom, in front of the fascinated jurors:

—On this Sunday 20th, therefore, around two o'clock in the afternoon, Cordélia went to Vespers¹³. She returned around three and a quarter o'clock with Samuel.

Isidore devoted his last moments of life to resting unnecessarily in his large marital bed, believing that he could resume the exhausting burden of daily work the next morning.

—Between three and a half and four o'clock, I saw Samuel Parslow harnessing the horse to the cabriolet. Then he uncoupled it because Cordélia seemed to have changed her mind.

She had probably considered for a moment to move away from the site where the crime was just to be perpetrated.

¹³ ● Vespers was once a Sunday religious service celebrated in the late afternoon.

—Usually, it was Isidore who was going out to harness, but this time Samuel did!

He had to get used to being the master of the house, which he thought would happen.

—At 4:25 p.m., Mrs. Poirier got out and settled into the cabriolet that Parslow had just hitched again. Madame left alone. Samuel entered the house again and did not leave until 6:00 in the evening to return to his brother's house where he was taking room and board. So, he had more than an hour to slaughter his friend and boss.

At his brother's house, where he took refuge after the murder, the investigation revealed that the assassin had a good appetite —how is this possible?— and did not leave until the next morning after a solid lunch. Cordélia inexplicably spent the night at her own brother's house, contrary to her habit. She was afraid of the dead?

On Monday morning at about 7:00 a.m., before returning home, she stopped by Parslow's house, who simply announced laconically: "*It's done!*"

She returned home alone to play the next scene, that of the discovery of the body. It was an essential scene that had to be most convincing if she wanted to save her head. Sam Parslow, the murderer, *was the only one to hold the only key* to her house and she forgot to pick it up from her servant. Unbelievable behavior! Or maybe she did not want to be alone in front of a scene of carnage and she wanted her husband's corpse to be discovered by a neighbor.

With slowness and great hesitation, Cordélia (always under the attentive scrutiny of Madame Bouvrette) went up to the door of her porch and found the door locked as

expected. So, she went to knock on the door of the Bouvrette. Madame Bouvrette, who had observed the merry-go-round with great attention, came to open the door. Cordélia said to her:

—I absolutely must go and play the organ in church. I have a wedding at 8:00 am. Could your husband harness my horse, please? I will come back after the ceremony.

When the wedding mass was over, Cordélia returned to the Bouvrette's. At her request, Mr. Bouvrette armed himself with a screwdriver, lifted a sash window to open the door from the inside. Anxious not to be the one who would discover the carnage, she then said:

—Can you go and see in my husband's bedroom? I have a strange feeling.

This curious comment was duly reported to the jurors. As can be expected, it made a great impression. As soon as he entered, Bouvrette let out a scream.

—Aaahhhh! Your husband is here, Madame Poirier! His throat is slit from ear to ear with a butcher's knife!

Isidore was lying across the bed in a pool of blood. On the pillow, to his left, lay a large cutlass all bloodied. The body, totally drained, revealed six serious injuries, two of which were fatal, as the medical examiner would later point out. Cordélia approached the threshold of the room but did not let out any screams when the horrible picture was offered to her eyes. Paradoxically, she did not emit the slightest word, the slightest sound. She simply covered her eyes with her hands, "*without any tears*" noted

Mr. Bouvrette. The latter brought Cordélia to his home to prepare a cordial that would comfort her.

Cordélia stayed there until noon. Samuel Parslow joined her, took a seat with her, but another revealing and incriminating singularity, they did not speak *at all* of Isidore's death. Curious! Justice Taschereau, who presided over the Court of Queen's Bench, found this silence overwhelming. It was a deafening silence of guilt¹⁴, a thunderous admission of guilt! According to the Coroner's reconstruction, the old man was resting on the bed while waiting for his beloved wife to return, when Parslow, armed with the large deli knife, punched him in the face with several blows.

One of the gashes started from the left temple and traced a long wound of 15 to 20 cm up to the throat. Under the sharp pain, Poirier came out of his half-sleep and carried his hands forward, in protection. He then tried to stand up and grab the blade. His hand and fingers were cut to the bone, the tendons of his hands severed.

A second blow hit the victim on the chin. The killer and the victim then hugged each other in a fight to the death which lasted a long time. But the old Isidore, totally disarmed, was losing his blood in abundance, and weakness soon forced him to lean on the white wall on which the bloody imprint of his hand was clearly stamped. Stabbings were still raining down on Isidore. Exhausted, he pressed his cheek against the same wall where the trace of the face was imprinted like that of Christ on the veil of St.

¹⁴ • I borrow with pleasure from *The Fall of Albert Camus* this very adequate oxymoron.

Veronica. Finally, at the end of his strength, he fell to the floor.

Cordélia's young lover then hugged Isidore around his chest and laid him back on the bed, across the mattress. Having done so, anxious to ensure that Isidore was indeed dead and that he could not reveal the name of his killer, Samuel Parslow planted his cutlass near one ear, and sliced the neck to the other; this gesture *almost* detached the head from the body.



The news of the ferocious murder and the horror of the crime spread like wildfire through the city of Saint-Canut, all along the Laurentians, and then throughout the immense province of Quebec as a whole. Who could have indulged in this carnage? Very quickly, thanks to the judicious and assiduous observations of Madame Bouvrette, worthy of the best Gendarmerie sleuth, the police could easily proceed to the arrest of the alleged murderers. But this humble neighbor was not the only witness against him, far from it.

The trial began at the Palais de Justice of St. Scholastique, and the witnesses took the stand. One had seen over the months, the very significant signs of affection, just before one of the many "*guests*" entered "*the naughty house with three doors*." Another had seized "on the flight" comments that were not intended for him, and which suggested that Cordélia had witnessed the execution of the crime. That would explain why she had not looked surprised when she saw the scene of the killing.

The prison guard once heard Cordélia whisper to her lover through the door of her cell:

—*Sam, just say I wasn't there. It will be clear!*

Because if Samuel remained locked in his cell, Cordélia had the privilege of circulating in the corridors of the Prison.

However, at the end of the trial, on February 2nd, 1898, Cordélia was found guilty after two hours of deliberation. But on appeal, on December 5th, the verdict was quashed for defect of form, and a new trial began the same day. Finally on December 16th, she was found guilty, and on March 10th, 1899, Justice Taschereau sentenced her to death by hanging in the company of her lover, who had also just been found guilty after a parallel trial.



Executioner Daniel James Ratley Prior was at that time *the Executioner of the High Works of the Dominion of Canada*. He was given the lucrative task of ending the days of the two lovers. For ordinary people, he hid behind the pseudonym *Radclive* or sometimes even *Radcliffe*, presumably his mother's maiden name.

On March 7th, 1899, Ratley had a double gallows erected in front of the bars of Samuel Parslow's window; kind attention that most certainly denotes some degree of sadism. On the morning of the execution, on the 10th, the final catholic mass was celebrated at 7:00 a.m. in the chapel cell of the civil prison of Sainte-Scholastic. Cordélia had known since the day before that the Royal Grace was rejected by the old Queen Victoria who would soon join the two convicts in the mysterious Heavenly Elysium that terrorizes believers even more than unbelievers.

As usual, some groups had violently protested the execution of a woman. In vain. When he crossed the Ottawa River that separates the province of Ontario from that

of Quebec, the executioner Ratley quickly realized that he was not welcome neither in the Comté de Terrebonne nor elsewhere in Quebec, especially to execute a woman. On March 21st, 1902, three years after this double execution of 1899, Ratley returned to Gatineau¹⁵ to execute Stanislas Lacroix convinced of the murder of his wife. On this occasion, this same executioner will trigger a small scandal by declaring, in a state of advanced drunkenness, in a bar of the city, that he came "*to hang a "French" and that he hoped that it would not be the last.*" He got an unforgettable beating that day and realized that Québécois were not subjects of His Majesty quite like the others. It took a platoon of "Francophone" policemen to rescue him, his face swollen, his teeth broken. They spared him the ignominy of being inflicted by the Québécois what he did to others: hanging from a rope.

The executioners then sold in small fragments the ropes of the hanged. Some superstitious people firmly believed that it brought good luck. Ratley even had the reputation to fraudulently round off his large salary by buying ropes of the same caliber and sell them as hanging ropes. Ratley's successor, the hangman English, recounted in the interwar period that a B.C. sheriff had once caught Ratley in a Vancouver hardware store, buying stretches of rope to cut them as good luck charms. In Spain, the executioners sold the fat of the men killed by execution. That was reputed to anesthetize rheumatic pains¹⁶.

¹⁵ • The former name of the town was *Hull* but it is today absorbed into the city of *Gatineau*.

¹⁶ •Sergeant Bourgogne of the Napoleonic Imperial Guard had the harsh experience when he stole three jars of "animal" fat to cook his beans. The owner of the house with whom the soldier had received a "housing billet" was none other than the executioner of the city. (Adrien-Jean-Baptiste-François Bourgogne, *Mémoires du sergent Bourgogne*, Gallica, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

A few years later, in the same city of Vancouver, the **DAILY STAR** wrote that Ratley had allowed himself, on December 18th, 1908, to suggest cutting the braid of a Chinese man named Lee Chung who had been sentenced to death for the murder of a compatriot, Young Ah Hing, and who was to be executed behind the crenellated walls of the federal penitentiary at New Westminster (BC), now partly disappeared under the concrete and asphalt layer that invades the Fraser River Delta every day like a continental glacier. Desiring to make money on human misery, he wanted to "cut this tail into small pieces to make memories of the execution, and he expressed himself [according to **THE STAR** journalist] in such a way that he revealed the vulgarity of his temperament." Eventually, Lee Chung was effectively hanged without his braid, suggesting that Ratley carried out his despicable project¹⁷.

Lee Chung was executed along with two other convicts: James Jenkins, a 34-year-old black man accused of raping Mary Morrison and slitting her throat near Hazelmere¹⁸ in the municipality of Surrey, and John Pertella, another 44-year-old black man hanged for beating Mrs. Jenkins in Vancouver. The XIX Century was particularly harsh towards visible minorities, at least when it came to granting the gallows, especially since the theories of Charles Darwin¹⁹ began to spread among the Anglo-

¹⁷ •The Canadian missionary Mgr. Blanchet gives us the reason for the Chinese's fear: "It is an offense worthy of the penitentiary for every American to cut the braid of a Chinese [of America or Canada]; the reason is that he can no longer return to China, during his life, and after his death his bones cannot be transported to the land of the Celestial Empire." François-Xavier Blanchet, *Ten years on the Pacific Coast*, by a Canadian missionary, (*Dix ans sur la Côte du Pacifique, par un missionnaire canadien*), Imprimerie Léger Brousseau, Québec, 1873. p.80.

¹⁸ •Hazelmere is today a golf course where the author of these lines usually goes on Sundays

¹⁹ •Theories confirmed in 1912 by the quack paleontologist Arthur S. Woodward, President of the London Geological Society and Chief Curator of the Department of History

Saxon nations hypotheses on the *evolution of species* and peoples, and on the "survival of the strongest only".

All these theories were used in the twentieth century to advocate and support different ideological perspectives, including uncontrolled economic *laissez-faire*, sordid *Nazism*, *colonialism* (sometimes harmful but also a source of rapid evolution in some countries), *narrow racism*, paralyzing *imperialism* "English-style", and even the savage globalism of *the Neo-Conservatism* from across the border, to a certain extent²⁰.



But let's go back to that March 7th, 1899, when the double gallows were erected in the prison of Sainte-Scholastique intended for the couple of lovers Cordélia and Samuel. Literally terrified by the reception of Québécois, the executioner Ratley had to retire in the *Palais de Justice*. No one in Quebec wanting to rent him any room, he spent the night in a double-locked prison cell. Finally, fearing for his own life, he insisted to Shérif Lapointe that the time for execution be brought forward. The tickets had been sold very expensive to the population (the equivalent of \$500 today), and there was no question of letting the show spoiled by a riot that might have resulted in a general refund.

After the final Catholic Mass, Cordélia received her poor grieving parents who could not believe that their virtuous daughter could have perpetrated such a horrible

of the British Museum. See the *Pitldown Man*, a pseudo-scientific imprint intended to serve as a missing link and confirm Darwin's Theories.

²⁰ ●Although Globalism is beginning to suggest that the strongest peoples are not necessarily those who were believed. Imperialism was "paralyzing" because the colonial laws of England forbade the colonies to compete with the metropolis in the manufacturing fields.

crime. Parents always think they know their children inside and out. Then the sad procession shook in the direction of the gallows. The shérif opened the march. Behind, the condemned followed, hands tied behind her back and accompanied by two nuns full of compassion. Ah! If she had been able to listen to her parents and their dusty, obsolete, and cheesy recommendations! She wouldn't be there! These flimsy and self-effacing nuns had done the impossible to soften the last hours of the condemned in her cell. Now they were reciting in mid-voice the sinister penitential psalm N°130:

*De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine, Domine,
Exaudi vocem meam.*

*From the depths of the abyss, I cry out to you,
Lord! O Lord, Listen to my call!*

The group exited into the courtyard of the prison where the sinister *Woods of Justice* stood. The chaplain, Father Meloche, took the young woman by the arm to help her climb the 13 steps of the stairs that could have been slippery. The air was freezing. Winter had not yet lowered its chill flag. The motionless crowd on wooden and straw chairs seemed bewitched by the horrible spectacle, totally insensitive to the Marmorean cold. Outside the walls, hundreds of curious free-riders were perched on roofs, on telegraph poles and in the trees.

Hangman Ratley, who received a hefty commission on the price of the tickets, had arranged to lower the gallows by a good meter to prevent all those illegal free riders from seeing the hanged convicts from their perches, without having paid their tickets. For this, he had dug a pit

under the gallows. Eager to discourage the most stubborn hunters and tricksters, the sheriff fired even several gunshots in the air to frighten them and force them to flee. In vain! Curiosity and a taste for the horrible were the strongest. Samuel, shaken and panicking, leaned on the shoulders of two priests. Why, then, had he not been able to resist this woman and her own devouring passion?

Cordélia Poirier, for her part, remained dignified. She had long hoped to pull out of the game by letting Samuel pay alone for her crime. During the trial, she had also defended herself—with a gesture of repulsion—from feeling the slightest love for the man who had killed for her. Her outraged pout and gesture of disdain had, she believed, rehabilitated her Virtue in peril. The jurors, moreover, had been very impressed. She seemed more outraged by the suspicion of debauchery than for orchestrating such a cruel assassination. Sad times! Should Samuel pay alone for the *total balance of all accounts*? Faced with the hesitations of the jurors, the judge had warned them against such an injustice. They had no right to spare the one who had been the real instigator of the crime on the pretext that she was a woman, by placing all the blame on the one who had been the knife. The *brain* and the *hand* had to pay an equal price. Such was Justice and Equity²¹.

Whatever her weaknesses, seeing the inevitable end of her life appear, Cordélia knew how to keep her dignity. She squeezed the executioner's hand firmly in her cell before he tied her forearms. Curiously, despite the

²¹ ●Pauline Cadieux published, in 1977, at Éditions Libre Expression, a book (The lamp in the window) which wished to whitewash Cordélia in order to present her as a victim unjustly condemned by the Justice of Males. In vain. While some women in this book were unjustly sentenced to death (such as Eleanor Power, Emilie Blake or Marguerite Pitre), Cordélia Viau-Poirier's guilt remains an absolute certainty. Whether or not to adhere to the principle of the death penalty is another problem.

widespread opposition to the execution of a woman, some people approved Cordélia's punishment. Many inmates loudly insulted her for having tried to blame her young lover for the crime, after having led him to believe that she loved him by granting him the pleasures of her charms to enslave him to her willpower.

Proudly, Cordélia faced all these vociferous males. She gave a long, scornful look of contempt to all those who were screamed their hatred. In contrast, her lover, Samuel Parslow, seemed totally desperate. As soon as she arrived under the common gallows, Ratley immediately began her usual routine. He lowered the hood – black this time – so as not to see the stared-out of the two convicts whose eyes he knew would be languishing in his insomnia. *"At night when I'm lying on my bed, I hear the screams of each of the executed who come to haunt me. I can see them one after the other on the hatch, waiting to meet their Creator. They obsess me and fill me with fear"*²², he revealed to a testimonial.

Then the executioner quickly tied the legs of the convicted so that they could not hold back at the edge of the catchment. He passed the 18^{mm} gauge shackle rope around their necks and tightened the large noose he placed on their left ear. After which, swelling his voice to recall that of Almighty God, he threw into the heavy silence that crushed everything, his usual exhortation which tore the people present from their strange fascination:

—*The Lord's Prayer!*

The chaplain began, in a low, monochord voice, insisting on every word:

²² • His words were revealed shortly after the death of the executioner by the American psychologist Rachel MacNair.

—*Hail Mary, full of grace...*

And when the priest came to: "*Deliver us from evil!*" the executioner unleashed the hatches, which slammed sinisterly in the thick cold. The two convicts suddenly disappeared from the sight of all, as if they had suddenly passed from the visible world to the Invisible Empire. Only the two stretched ropes were still agitated.

It was then that the most daring spectators, the most shameless, rushed to tear off the black skirt that revealed the base of the gallows where the two hanged still jerked in agony. All these curious, eager for strong senses, had paid dearly and wanted to see, to watch, to monitor the last palpitations of life that quickly escaped from the two dying like the air bubbles of a sunken wreck.

Ten minutes after the sinister fall, the two lovers had finally ceased to exist. The doctors declared that their hearts were no longer beating. It was, at that time, the mark of death, while we know today that the brain continues to live for many more minutes, such as the executed could hear and understand, long after "official death", the comments of those around him. The executioner laid the corpses in the coffins that lay at the bottom of the large hole, retrieved the ropes, and cut them into several fragments that he sold to the spectators as a good luck charm. A trickle of blood beaded at the corners of Cordélia's lips. A sinister spectator blushed his handkerchief.

In mythology, the Danaids murdered their wives on the very night of their wedding. For this crime, they were condemned to endlessly fill a pierced barrel. To Saint-Canut it was the husband who was murdered for having tried to fill the bottomless barrel of his wife's unfulfilled whims.

Thus died the infernal lovers.



-3-

Orangist Vendetta against Papists

The Mary Aylward murder case, 1862

If there is, throughout the world, and outside the Jews, a great people who suffered for his religion, it is the Irish people. And if the Jews were supported in their distress by the illusion of being the *Chosen People*, preferred by God, the Irish, on the other hand, owed their misfortune to a pope, an overly patriotic Pontifex, who had offered Ireland to England as one offers a kitten to a child, without worrying about the fate of the feline. It was Adrian IV, the only English pope¹ who ruled Roman Christendom. From that day on, England began to invade the island, to swallow it slowly, and to repel the Celts, these humanoids described as vulgar and uneducated, beyond a wooden palisade², the first *Wall of Shame* ever erected.

Since (according to Denis Diderot), "there is only one step between fanaticism and barbarism", social

¹ •Nicolas Briselance or Breakspear, born in Hertfordshire around 1100 and died in 1159 in Anagni. Presumably a Franco-Norman member of the immense French community that went to colonize and supervise England in the replacement of the ruling class driven out by William the Conqueror, Nicolas continued his studies in France and became pope (Adrian IV) from 1154 to 1159. According to tradition he gave Ireland to England but the text of this donation seems to be a forgery.

² •From this time and this palisade that separated the civilized from the savages, still remains the English expression: "*That's beyond the pale!*" It's on the other side of the fence = It's vulgar! It's wild! It's dangerous! The palisades were made of pals (blades), stakes, like the palisade that surrounded the city of Pau (pal).

oppression in this Irish island became religious, draconian, the worst of all, at the advent of the Reformation. It went as far as the ethnic cleansing of the nineteenth Century, when the Government of Queen Victoria refused to provide food aid to the Irish papists decimated by the famous potato famine (late blight) and by infectious diseases. It was a gigantic disaster.

Entire families of 10 or 12 children died in the greenery island and the woods of the Green Erin, in fields dotted with daisies, buttercups and poppies, along rivers whose water rumbled between the pebbles. The Anglo-Protestant Lords had expelled those families from their shacks whose rents they could not pay³. Hundreds of thousands of cadavers were rotting in the woods, poisoning fountains and groundwater, and triggering outbreaks of cholera and typhus. These diseases joined forces with starvation to decimate the Irish people from eight million to four in a short time.

Such was the infernal Irish "colony" in which Mary Aylward had lived the very first years of her childhood. She had seen her parents and her neighbors starve to death by whole families. She still remembered the smells of death sometimes invading the villages when a bad wind brought the pestilential fumes that came from the multitudes of corpses that the weakened living no longer had the strength to bury. She remembered the hunger that plagued her body. She could still see hands scouring the earth in the hope of finding one last potato that would have

³ And to expel all these families from their own country, they demolished the shacks with battering rams.

escaped the late blight. The potato was then the food of the Catholic Irish (the poor), while wheat was reserved for the rich, the Anglo-Protestants colonists. But the "*phy-*



Mary Aylward, Priv. Coll.

tophthora infestans" had spared no potatoes. The tubers were all corrupt; as corrupt as the Parliaments of Ireland and England who issued no protection in the face of this Crime against Humanity for which the Queen of England, Elizabeth II, asked forgiveness with lip service⁴ to the people of Ireland in 2011.

One day, thanks to good souls —and also thanks to Catholic *emigration movement*

strongly stimulated by the British Government— Mary was able to embark on a sailing ship bound for America. All these ships went to fetch timber from the New World, and the shipowners made the journey (to the West) profitable by filling their holds with unfortunate Irish as cargo, 20,000 a month! Mary still saw in her head that poor,

⁴ • "Lip service" because the English Queen simply said: "To all those who have suffered as a consequence of our troubled past, I extend my sincere thoughts and deep sympathy", which was not a real admission of guilt but tended to include in this "responsibility" the people of Ireland who had only rebelled in retaliation against England. *Penitential guilt?* What's that?

glassy-eyed humanity that was dying along the way. The sailors threw into the deep swell the corpses curled up by the sufferings of agony. Mary had had the incredible opportunity to survive this long ordeal and not to be among the 10% who had died along the way. They had all been immersed in the gloomy and mysterious depths of the Atlantic Ocean. She landed in New York with her brother who died shortly after of typhus contracted on the way. She saw him wither away in despair as they were captive in the large quarantine camp of Castle Garden⁵. So many

Irish emigrants on their way to the New World. Priv.Coll.



Catholics arrived in New York that the Protestant populations of that city and of New England cried out in horror

⁵ •Ellis Island was not yet in operation. Castle Garden received 11 million immigrants from 1820 to 1892. The Castle Garden camp was located at the tip of Manhattan in La Batterie Park. To prevent escapes, the American authorities moved the camp to Ellis Island.

and began to protest and to migrate to the West Coast where they founded new cities⁶.

The United States Government reacted by prohibiting this Papist Irish immigration into the United States (New York and the six states of New England), on pain of confiscation of the ships. The famous ideal⁷ that will later be engraved on the *Statue of Liberty* (when France will have offered it to the Americans to celebrate the centenary of their Independence), wasn't deserved yet.

After this ban, the sailboats had to unload their miserable immigrants in Canada in the quarantine camp of Grosse Île, where thousands and thousands of Irishmen also died. Even today, on Grosse-Île, which has become a memorial, a Celtic cross displays the following Celtic inscription: "Gaël's Children died by the thousands on this island, after fleeing laws and foreign tyrants, as well as an artificially provoked famine. May God bestow His loyal blessings on them. May this monument be a testimony of the *Gaels of America* to their name and honor. May God save Ireland⁸!"

⁶ •For example Portland in Oregon, named after Portland in Maine.

⁷ •On the base of the Statue of Liberty, these words have helped to accredit the myth of the open door, in this country slain by xenophobia: "Let your poor, your tired crowds, who aspire to breathe freely, miserable waste from your overcrowded shores. Send me those homeless people tossed around by the storm." The hypocritical Laws of 1921 and 1924 limit the maximum number of nationals in the United States of the country in question to 2% of the number of nationals in question; for example, if 10,000 Russian-Ukrainians lived in the United States, Ukraine could only send 200 new immigrants.

⁸ •The French and English versions were not allowed to undermine the honor of Queen Victoria and her Prime Minister John Russell who was the most virulent against the Irish Catholics. The laws mentioned are the Test Act. The adjective "foreigner" refers to the fact that the Government in London was alien to the Irish victims.

Finally released from the Castel-Garden Quarantine Camp, Mary, desperate to have lost her brother, the only person she could really count on, got hands-on jobs here and there, all over New England. There, she finally met Love under the guise of a man named Richard Aylward; a handsome Irishman who himself had landed in the United States at the tender age of 14, also driven out of his country by *organized famines* and contagious diseases spread by the non-burial of millions of dead.



Richard and Mary got married. Marriage was still fashionable in those distant times, lost behind the horizon of memories. This happy event took place on August 15th, 1855, feast of the Blessed Virgin. Later, the newlyweds left New England as intolerant as the old one. At that time, the development of the textile industry attracted multitudes of immigrants from Quebec. This influx filled the New Englanders with the terror of a Papist invasion, of a "*Great Replacement*" of the Protestants by the Catholics; as today, Christians in Europe consider themselves in danger of being replaced by Islam. People who are afraid sink into intolerance that leads them to persecute difference.

Anxious to flee the prejudices, our Irish couple then moved to Canada in the hope that the country would discriminate less against them, but instead of going to live in Québec where the religion would have been more tolerant, they went to Ontario to find a more familiar language. Richard and Mary received an agricultural concession in Ontario.

Three daughters were born of their great love. At the time of their parents' tragic death on the scaffold of Injustice, the oldest was only seven years old and the youngest sixteen months old. They would only inherit a deficient patrimony.



Our two Irish Papists soon realized that the Ontario grass was no greener than that of Old or New England, and that the demons of hatred that were then shaking Christendom —Protestants versus Catholics— were not going to make their lives easy and pleasant, as they had initially hoped.

In Ontario, Richard and Mary were apprehensive because their farm was surrounded by farms run by Anglo-Protestants. They desperately tried to socialize positively with everyone, but it was enough to look at the hostile face and attitude of the villagers to foresee that their existence would not be easy in these places. Their immediate neighbor was a certain William Munro⁹, and as often happened between neighbors of different religions, the Aylwards immediately felt that a great animosity developed against them and a wall of mistrust ghettoized their property. Hatred towards the Irish Papists had spread from the Motherland to all the colonies of the British Empire, even though

⁹ •The Munro clan was Scottish, therefore Gaelic, but protestant. Sir Robert Munro, 6th Baronet of Foulisse had been fighting in the English ranks during the Scottish Catholic (Jacobite) uprising of 1715. Very ingenious in the art of neutralizing their enemies by pitting them against each other, the English kings always used Scottish Protestant regiments to crush the Irish Catholics and vice versa. The hatred between the Celtic brothers was therefore at its height. The Foulis (or Foulisse) Castle is situated three kilometres south-west of Evanton in the parish of Kiltarn, Ross and Cromarty, in the Highlands of Scotland.

the vector of this hatred (the *Test Act*) had been officially abolished by George IV, just before the Victoria Reign. An investigation by the English newspaper THE TELEGRAPH dated August 5th, 2013, concluded that even today, "*millions of English people snubbed their neighbors*¹⁰" for a thousand of reasons. But, luckily, they are unarmed (today).

Everything could certainly have happened without embarrassment, if, at that very time, Canadian farmers (like those in the United States) had not been armed. Where two unarmed men would have given each other slaps on the wrist, with their firearms they were riddling each other with buckshot, 303-caliber war projectiles, or even, after 1875, with rifle bullets *dum-dum*¹¹ that the British army used in India against the indigenous populations to convince them to accept Queen Victoria as their Empress of India.



On May 16th, 1862, the insults first whispered in the secrecy of the cottages would suddenly turn into howls of hatred. That day, in the late afternoon, the neighbor, Mrs. Munro, furious, shouted to her husband that *she was missing a hen* in her large backyard and that she had *heard a shot* coming from these "*goddam popish*." Munro

¹⁰ •Under the headline: "Snub thy neighbor; millions are feuding with people on their street. Millions of Britons are currently not talking to at least one of their neighbors, a survey (by Swinton) has shown: 6 in 10 are not speaking to two neighbors."

¹¹ •*Dum-dum* bullets were made by the British munitions factory in Dum-Dum, near Calcutta. They made a hole in the body 20 cm in diameter.

immediately took his armament, jumped on his horse and, in the company of his son Alexander, went to confront Aylward and accuse him of being only a shabby waste of society, a vulgar chicken thief.

The two accusers, their faces distorted by a rictus of rage, entered the Aylward's property and came to tie their horse at the door. Very menacing pistols furiously beat their thighs. Faced with this provocative and deliberate intrusion of his home, Richard took out a shotgun. His wife Mary, who was gardening farther away, immediately came to his side armed with the tool she was working with, a sickle.

Ah! Sickles! They so mythologize the work of men that some totalitarian regimes have adopted them as symbols of their doctrines and credos. Never have the peasants of Russia suffered more misfortunes and abuses than under the reign of *the sickle and the hammer*. Millions died. We will see in this book that this reaper's tool had already sent Eleanor Power and several of her companions to the gallows¹², and he was not going to fail to convict the Aylward couple.

The order of sequence of events that followed is not clear because the Prosecutor, the attorneys and the lawyers carefully mixed the cards in order to achieve their usual ends: push jurors and magistrates to think the Moon is made of green cheese and the innocents were culprits. Shouldn't we pay these professional liars dearly to be exonerated when we are guilty? But it can cost even more expensive not to invest in it. It is not the Aylward couple

¹² • See next chapter of this work.

who would dispute this opinion if they had survived this brawl.

Whatever the case, Richard firmly declared to Munro that they had neither seen their hen nor killed their bird, and that in any case they could not find their hen at home because it was not there. That said, the Irish couple ordered the two aggressive neighbors to immediately leave their property. Yet Munro, devoured by prejudice, and no doubt eager to turn the knife into the wound of humiliation, could not or would not believe in the innocence of the Aylwards. He replied vigorously that the hen still had to be in their backyard. This seemed a simple pretext to humiliate the Aylwards forcing them to let themselves be inspected, since the shot allegedly fired by Madame must have killed the bird anyway.

With a lot of gloomy mood, the Irish allowed their neighbors to visit their backyard. The three men, armed to the teeth, and Mrs. Aylward, sickle in hand, headed for the back farmyard, inveighing each other with accusations mixed with insults. The rest was reported in different ways depending on the Christian sect to which the four witnesses belonged. A stampede suddenly broke out when Munro-father grabbed the barrel of Aylward's rifle. Pistols were then violently brandished. Mary herself actively participated in the struggle with the usual energy of Irish women who ignite as quickly as amadou, for love as for hate, especially when they think that their national honor is being flouted.

Suddenly, in the fray, as Munro-father clung to the barrel of Aylward's rifle, carefully spreading it away from

himself, a shot went off and the Munro-son who was inadvertently in the trajectory of the gun, received twenty-nine shotgun pellets in the back. Was it the father's hand that had involuntarily directed the barrel of the rifle at his son? Probably nobody ever knew it for sure! Gunfire erupted. No longer holding on to it, Mary then hit Munro-father with a sickle in the upper arm and then did hit him on the head. She bore these blows without much force but with firmness.

Under the sudden attack, the two Munros retreated, evacuated the Aylward's property as quickly as possible, and returned home firing a few shots to cover their escape in order to discourage any pursuit. The Munro's few projectiles did not hit anyone. Everything could have remained at the level of resentment and hatred if the wounds had healed. Unfortunately for the two Irishmen, if the shotgun pellets resulted in only twenty-nine tiny scars, the sickle shot triggered a septicemia¹³ and Munro-father died a week later.

The son, for his part, survived his injuries and found himself the main witness in the criminal trial that took place at the Court of Assizes.

As soon as this death was announced, Mary and her husband were arrested and remained incarcerated in separate cells for the last eight months of their lives. They could only glimpse each other during the Court sittings. Their three daughters (given to foster families) were only

¹³ •A septicemy is a generalized infection of the body due to massive emissions into the blood of pathogenic bacteria from the dirty sickle.

allowed to kiss them once, the antepenultimate night of their lives before their hanging.

The Court of Assizes Trial of the Aylward couple began on October 21st, 1862 in Belleville (Ontario), in the courthouse on Rue de l'Église. Unfortunately, just before their trial, another homicide was taken care of which had an impact on the fate of the Aylward. A man named Maurice Moorman (presumably Catholic) had stabbed to death Lorenzo Taylor (nineteen years old), apparently a Protestant.

Thus, two other Christians from different sects had shown themselves determined to kill each other with the insanity of today's Sunnis and Shiites. Would the wars of religion never stop? Will today's Gods, like the deities of Greco-Roman antiquity, always behave like rogues? Will some believers remain subhumans for a long time to come by using religious pretexts to indulge in their lowest instincts?

Immediately after Moorman's conviction, the Aylward couple's Proceedings opened in the same courthouse and in a climate that tends to erode peace. The medical Coroner claimed that William would have survived without the sickle attack. My goodness, what an amazing discovery! Munro-son, for his part, maintained that the Irishman had taken his father without any warning and then turned his weapon towards him to inflict the same fate, while Mrs. Aylward hit his father with her sickle as he lay on the ground, seriously wounded. Richard asserted forcefully and insistently that the shot had only gone when the father had seized the barrel of his shotgun while the two intruders had themselves drawn their own revolver.

But the Aylwards were recent immigrants; even more, Irish papists, two unforgivable flaws in Ontario at

the time. The Munro, Protestants, had been in the country for a long time and had had time to forge bonds of friendship with their co-religionists who had colonized this province of Ontario born of the splitting of the Province of Quebec¹⁴. Close friends of the Munros even sat on the jury without the Defense Lawyer protesting in the slightest. Also, despite the fact that the Munros were *the intruders*, who had broken into the Aylwards' property without any authorization—which was then considered by everyone to be a crime—the entirely Protestant jury found them both guilty. Only a *Recommendation of Clemency* was granted to them... which was of no use to them because Ontario was then in the grip of a virulent Order of Orange fanaticism¹⁵ which, as in colonial Ireland, lasted for several generations, until the middle of the following century.

These Order of Orange fanatics were the same ones who had demanded the execution of Louis Riel in 1885. In 1913 they were anxious to stifle Franco-Ontarians who wanted to create their own French schools System and obtain legal rights for their language. To this end, the Orangists did not hesitate to ally themselves with the Irish Catholics of Ontario in order to better block the wishes of the Francophones. Together, they prevented Franco-Ontarians from gaining recognition for their language. This anti-Franco-Ontarian movement called itself Green-Orange¹⁶. This flagrant injustice was one of the causes of French

¹⁴ • It was the Constitutional Act of 1791 that created the province called Upper Canada to allow 50,000 American refugees (who had wanted to remain English and Protestant) not to live under the democratic domination of Catholic French Canadians. So the Province of Québec was split into two provinces.

¹⁵ • *Orangism* came from William of Orange who became Protestant co-king of England with his wife following a coup d'État and a Revolution. The Clemency that could have saved the Aylward's heads was not even taken into consideration.

¹⁶ • Green symbolized the Green Erin and Orange the Protestant movement (the Order of Orange). This Green-Orange Movement opposed Regulation XVII ruling the use of the French language in Ontario.

Canadians' opposition to Conscription to provide new blood for the sake of Great Britain during the Great War, when the General and Universal Conscription did not even exist in England.



The date of the killing of Mary and her dear Richard was set for December 6th, 1862. This was the time when it was decided that executions should take place six weeks after the date of the verdict so as to take into consideration the remoteness of certain villages.

It was also hoped that this period of time would allow passions to drop so as not to cause irreparable injustice. But five short weeks are very brief to tame the odious hydra of intolerance. In this case, the passions did not cool down despite the multiple and imploring calls.

Petitions circulated in Belleville, especially in the Catholic parishes, so that the condemned couple would at least obtain the Clemency of the Court of Justice which had been recommended by the Jury. All these generous prayers were sent to Bytown, which was named *Ottawa* on January 1st, 1855, a city that was preparing to adorn itself ten years later with the title of *capital of the Dominion of Canada*. Prudent English politicians had used the term *Dominion* instead of *Kingdom* to avoid displeasing the Americans who were becoming too powerful with their thirty-six million inhabitants when Canada could only align three and a half million citizens¹⁷.

¹⁷ •At the same time the population of the countries that would later form Germany was 40 million approximatively, France 30 million, the United Kingdom also 30 million. It was not until 1870 that the population of the United States reached that of France: 38 million.

Other timid petitions, sent by some Protestant parishes of Belleville, quickly followed. Faced with this, a request for Clemency or Grace was sent to the Governor-General of Canada, Viscount Charles Stanley Monck, an Irishman born in Templemore (Tipperary) in 1819, who became Governor-General of Canada in 1861. But Monck was of anglo-Protestant family —otherwise the man would not have held this honorary position— and he was one of dozens of Protestant lords under whose rule London had harnessed and hindered Catholic Ireland in the hope of forcing its population to convert *en masse* to Protestantism or emigrate to America; sad era of racism. Viscount Monck of course refused to intercede.

There had been two executions in Belleville so far. Both had been public. George Barnhard had been hanged in the summer of 1854 following a similar neighborhood dispute that turned into a homicide. The last was Samuel Rock, hanged on June 12th, 1959, for the same kind of crime. Obviously, the blood of the Belleville population was too hot and their religions too hateful!

In any case, the two sentenced persons, Mary and Richard, were detained in cells located in the basement of the Law Courts House. During the first week of December their ears had been alerted by the sounds of nails and hammers of the carpenters who were building the scaffold¹⁸. Then came the multiple attempts to check if the hatches (the trap door) was working properly. The hangman used sandbags of the same weight as the condemned man and woman.

The platform of the gallows formed a cornice (1.50^m x 2.70^m) that dominated the east façade. It was accessed through a large French window on the second floor, if we

¹⁸ •Basements are, in fact, half-basements. Small windows, near the ceiling, allow to see the daylight.

call (according to local tradition) the ground floor, "first floor". Two hatches pierced this platform, 0.90^m from each other. Two beams of the building protruded just above these hatches. Strong steel hooks hammered by a skilled blacksmith, pierced from side to side each of these planks.

It was truly a gallows of the most primitive, of the most sinister kind, but despite this, on Saturday, December 6th, as soon as the gallows were completed, hundreds of curious people from the Lake Ontario area and the entire Ontario Peninsula¹⁹, came to parade in the courtyard to observe *the Woods of Justice* and shudder with horror imagining the Aylward couple passing brutally through the hatches to find themselves face to face underneath, in a horrible nightmarish *peekaboo*. The silent procession of peaceful citizens eager for strong sensations continued and lasted all day on Sunday.



Monday morning rose, freezing but clear. Despite the temperature well below zero, five thousand onlookers had massed at dawn in front of the *Palais de Justice* to occupy the best places. Some had not hesitated to brave the cold nights to see better. Most had brought breakfast and a bottle of brandy in order to better withstand the cold and starvation in the Siberian rigors of this frigid night and morning.

Although the execution had been set at ten o'clock, all these curious people had to wait an entire extra hour because the stubborn Irish chaplain, Father Brennen, had sent a final telegram to Ottawa to request an ultimate

¹⁹ •The Ontario Peninsula is the southern part of the Province of Ontario. It is bounded by Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron, and the territorial border of Quebec.

dismissal, and he hoped for the good news until the last moment. In vain!

Monck and the politicians did not want to displease the fanatical populace, for fear of drawing on themselves the hatred of Ontarians, like a matador who would pass between the rabid beast and the injured toreador to divert the charge from the animal. A career politician could not in any way bring himself to "ruin the day of spectacle" of all those curious who had suffered so long in the freezing cold! It is easy to imagine the additional torture that this long wait inflicted on the convicted.

At eleven fifteen o'clock, to the general satisfaction, the executioner came out through the French window to emerge directly on the cornice platform. His head and face were covered with a white hood. Arriving the day before from Toronto, the executioner had spent the entire weekend carefully concealed in the Belleville Courthouse building, because he feared being discovered, recognized and beaten to death. He knew very well that the execution of a woman —and even more, an Irish woman— gave terrible heartburn to thousands of French-speaking and Irish citizens of the *Province of Canada*²⁰. And these Canadians with big hearts, with sensitivity on the skin surface, would not have hesitated to blow his head off to grant Mary a few days of survival. Richard, for his part, could die without a care. No one would worry about this man except his own mother... if she had known about it.

A witness described the scene as follows: "At eleven o'clock and a quarter, on Monday²¹, December 10th, 1862,

²⁰ •The four British provinces or colonies of North America (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Canada, and New Brunswick) would soon (in 1867) regroup into a Confederation that would take the name of Canada. Canada was the name of the largest province until then.

²¹ •Kirby, Paul, First Couple Hanged in Canada, *The Tragedy of Mary and Richard Aylward*, Little Brick Book House.

the sad procession began to swerve from the cell into the icy air of the courtyard. It is impossible to imagine the reaction of the Aylwards when they entered this famous balcony-gallows overlooking the courtyard of the prison-courthouse, when they saw the massive multitude of more than 5,000 people —many completely drunk— who came to watch them die.

Under the cries of some Orangists: "*Get them out! Hang them!*" as well as other less audible comments from the populace, the procession approached solemnly to place itself around the gallows. In front, stood the sheriff's deputies and the bailiffs²², then the white hooded executioner. Stricken with a deadly pallor, Mary followed, preceding her husband, Richard. Each wore around the neck a hemp rope with its huge noose. The free end ended with a loop, ready to be passed through one of the two steel hooks of the stem. Mary and Richard slowly took their place, trembling, on the hatches of the platform. Then every icy breath froze, and the two condemned, side by side, saw only a sea of raised faces, anguished, tense. Mary had dressed in white with a pancake shawl on her shoulders."

Suddenly, in front of this vast carpet of hostility staked with 10,000 hateful eyes that observed them like an apocalyptic beast ready to devour them, the two condemned fell on their knees, hands clasped together, tied by a thinner rope, as if they wished to pronounce a fervent prayer. They probably wanted to ask their God, with the help of the Catholic chaplain, the strength to accept to die knowing that they were innocent, just to satisfy those nasty eyes. Perhaps they would have understood what the Blacks

²² •Bailiffs, from the old French of the Province of Normandy *baili*, agent or magistrate of the king. The *baillis* and seneschals were, in France, royal officers exercising by delegation the judicial and military powers over a province of the Kingdom of France.

of the Deep South, lynched for an unjust cause of hatred, will think a few years later.

The mob was now perfectly silent. Even the most racist, overexcited by alcohol, had finally stopped uttering their insults unworthy of Christians. The local sheriff and other active members of the ceremony stood near the French window through which the gloomy process had arisen.

With great courage and firmness, the two convicts, very pale, repeated, on their knees, Father Brennan's brief prayer. Then, calmly, they protested again, without anger, to ensure that they had acted only in a state of legitimate defense against the Munro. This was undeniable according to the laws in force in Ontario. But, despite the blatant and shameful injustice of their condemnation, they had to drink the chalice to the dregs.

At the signal of the executioner, the two convicts rose to place themselves in the center of the traps. The executioner then passed the loop of each rope to a steel hook. Then he quickly put on a white hood over the heads of the two Irishmen, taking care to pass it through the hemp loop, and, without waiting, as if he had hastened that everything was finally finished for them, he pushed the lever to trigger the hatches. The double snap exploded in the icy silence and everyone, even the most hateful fanatics who were undoubtedly the most inebriated, trembled and felt seized with horror and fright.

Father Brennan, who had backed back two steps when the convicts had moved on the hatches, was unable to bear this monstrous spectacle for a moment. He suddenly fainted and collapsed like a lump on the floor, with a great *bang*. The executioner, always fearing some retaliation on him, jumped, and turned around, adjusting his

hood so that the eyes would be placed in front of the holes. The chaplain was taken away, unconscious.

Mrs. Munro's unjustified complaint about her missing hen had resulted in the death of three people. Perhaps she wondered if she should not have turned her tongue seven times in her mouth before shouting "Thief!"

Below the balcony-scaffold the two bodies, as if in madness, appeared in a fraction of a second, frantically agitating. Then, little by little, the jolts faded. The grotesque contortions of Mary's frail body continued by weakening for a minute and a half, until her life and soul flew to a world that was probably more merciful, a world without racism where all the righteous are admitted to Paradise, regardless of their religion or sect; contrary to what is claimed by all those professional liars who are called the ministers of all the cults of the world: priests, rabbis, imams, pastors, brahmanes, druids, muftis, popes, ovates, talapoins, ayatollahs and other ratichons infatuated with themselves and ready to dedicate to gehenna all humanity who do not believe in their sorcery.

Richard continued his disordered convulsions for another minute, struggling to desperately seek his breath, to cling to life, against an inexorable death. Then he joined his little Mary and Peace, the Ultimate Peace beyond all these human abominations. The sheriff allowed the two bodies to continue to empty themselves of any shadow of life for the greatest satisfaction of those who had come from far away to see them suffer and succumb, in order to satisfy their relentless revenge.

Richard was only twenty-six years old and Mary even less, twenty-three. She was just out of her teens.



Returned to consciousness after having brutally suffered in his soul the violence of these unjustified murders, Father Brennen took the two corpses for burial. During the Absolution rite²³, in other words the *farewell ceremony*, the Irish priest launched into an emotional sermon that could have attracted the wrath of the Judicial Authorities.

He demonstrated with strong gestures that Mary and Richard had *not acted out of self-defense* because the two Munros had come armed and ready to fight, in order to impose by the force of the weapons their vengeful will. *But this was deliberately hidden from the jurors during the trial and ignored by the Prosecution.* As a result, Father Brennen did not consider Richard and Mary as murderers, and, consequently, he had decided to give them a Christian burial in the local cemetery of Belleville. No matter what the jurors and all the fanatics in the world thought!

It was fifteen o'clock on the day of the execution when the bodies of the Aylward parents were transferred to St Michael's Church. They were placed in a large catafalque which barred the central aisle. The church immediately filled with Irishmen, their faces contracted with fury and hatred... this red hatred like the infernal embers, displayed by the Catholics of Ulster when the Protestants, protected by the King of England, come through their quarters to taunt them by reminding them that every year, on July 12th, they must remember that the Irish Catholics were once massacred by the Anglo-Protestants²⁴.

Reverend Brennan began the *Farewell Mass*. After quickly dispatching the *Introibo*, the priest left the altar

²³ ●The *Absolution* (or *Absoute*) is a rite and prayer in the Catholic liturgy that concludes the funeral ceremony in the church. It includes a chant that implores complete deliverance from the sins of the deceased, followed by sprinkling and incensing of the body. A similar rite may be performed at the cemetery.

²⁴ ●Battle of the Boyne, Cath na Boinne, Bataille de la Boyne, July 12th, 1690.

and walked towards the lectern used for the homily, facing the large, heavily silent assembly. He remained a few seconds to look at the crowd, his eyes half-closed, his forehead dug a deep wrinkle, and, after a rather mystical preamble, he tackled the heart of the matter²⁵:

"This is the circumstances of the death of these poor creatures that push me to deviate from my usual purpose, on such an occasion, that is to say on the occasion of the burial of a deceased person. The two people whose bodies are in front of you, well, I have real reasons to believe that they were not guilty of the crime for which they died!" Many whispers and buzzes filled the assembly. Everyone knew that the priest risked his freedom for *Contempt of Court*, by stating that *a Court of Justice had allowed itself to be contaminated and corrupted by the most despicable racism.*"

The clergyman continued: "Of this, I am as convinced as I am certain of being alive. You all know that the Catholic Church condemns murder and is always ready to punish murderers. Because God gave His life for us, we do not accept to let it be said that, because a man is Catholic, Protestant or atheist, he has no right to our compassion and mercy of God. He remains a creature of God. God created him; God can end his life, and to God this man must offer his life..."

The priest was reluctant to deliberately plunge into a Contempt of Court. He was still cautiously wading in theological verbiage like a fish in the protective algae to avoid

²⁵ •Source: CIHM file - file N°29599: The Aywards and Their Orphans; Unjust hanging of Prisonners at Belleville C.W. Trial for Murder and Proof of their innocence. A full Report of all the Facts for Public Information and to Call fort Sympathy for the Orphans. Printed by LP Normand St-Roch.

exposing himself to the sharp teeth of a judicial shark. But one could feel that in his throat, the words were pushing to come out and gush out. They jostled each other until they suffocated him.

"I cannot ignore the events that led to the trial and conviction of this man and this woman... But I must say that I do not accept that one slaughter anyone by violence. Most of the time, such a death does not allow a man to ask forgiveness for his faults. At the end of this trial, my friends, some people living in this city, who boast of their relations with the Judicial Administration, said these frightening words, "*Aylward and his wife are screwed!*"

Like a cloud of flies disturbed by an intruder, who rises buzzing over a deposit of rubbish, the murmurs of the whispered comments resumed more and more in the assembly. "*It's true, my friends, that they were screwed!*" The whispers resumed more than ever, and sobs emerged from the buzz like snowdrops in early spring. "Now, I will briefly allude to this case and the circumstances related to this trial and the execution of these poor creatures:

"Aylward and his wife were peacefully sitting at the table for dinner when the poor and unfortunate Munro came knocking on their door, to talk to Aylward about some poultry that were in a small field between the two cabins. Aylward replied, "*I didn't kill your chickens, and I didn't steal them. I ask you to get out of my property and go home.*" However, this frail man lingered for a long time around the Aylward's and the latter came out²⁶. An argument and a clash ensued. Believing himself to be in personal danger, Aylward called his wife who was in the

²⁶ ● There was no police force in this region

cabin. She went out grabbing a gun in the process to rescue her man. Hitting Munro, she didn't even know, given her fear, whether she was hitting her husband or Munro. After surviving twelve days, poor Munro died. If he had not been treated by a charlatan, he would still be alive today. There is not in the British Judicial Records or in the whole of British history, the slightest instance where a person who *legitimately defends himself in his property*, has been sentenced to death, because *his house is his castle*...

"There is another mitigating circumstance²⁷ in her favor; she did not repeat the blow; I insist on that. You see, my friends, how this futile quarrel has had a terrible consequence." The cloud of buzzing flies rose again from the furious assembly.

"It would have been so easy to solve this problem without resorting to this violence... the priest resumed. In court, the two accused were deprived of the resources that would have acquitted them. For, there were testimonies of refutation that could have been obtained. But the length of the journeys, the poverty of the people and the inclemency of the weather had prevented them from going so far away to get these testimonies. All this had worked against them and in the most pernicious way, because there were as many voices against these unfortunate creatures as there were inhabitants in Belleville..." The angry flies buzzed again.

"It seems very strange to me that these people could not see how this quarrel had unfolded, what were its causes and origins. Each of them should have better weighed the origin of the brawl and what aggravating circumstances

²⁷ • "Extenuating circumstance"; «circonstances atténuantes.»

were imputed to the Aylwards to condemn them to death for murder... Yet, my friends, this verdict was accompanied by a *Recommendation for Clemency*... As long as you live, my friends, and I also address the whole country, I implore you, with all the energy I possess, *never*, when you have the Grace of a condemned person in your hands, *never* to abandon it in the hands of merciless individuals... I tell you that if I had a thousand years left to live, I would *never* want to... *never* entrust to others this right of Clemency.... And I am pleased to say from all the circumstances of this case, and from my intimate knowledge of their conduct, that they were *not guilty* of this crime for which they suffered that very day." The flies resumed their menacing humming noise.

These were the bold words of the chaplain, who spoke angrily, extending an accusatory finger against the Justice of his country. The priest's words seemed to face an ebb and flow of murmurs and anger. It was a perpetual cloud of flies whose humming of rage rose and fell, filling the room with fierce anger. This Justice cared very little for its own blunders, especially since the magistrates felt totally untouchable, regardless of their guilty mistakes or the crimes they committed. Certainly, the jurors should have declared the defendants totally innocent rather than entrusting this Right of Grace to others.

Religious fanaticism was then in the air, like sufferings, racist oppression, death and fatality of war, symbolized (in 1943) by *Les Mouches* from Jean-Paul Sartre²⁸.

²⁸ Sartre who in 1943, under the Nazi occupation, limited himself to doing *bad spirit totally concealed* as a substitute for any Resistance. He only played the furious anti-Nazi warmonger after the war.

Twenty-three years later the Aylward (in 1885), this same fanaticism would kill the Canadian hero, Louis Riel. In both cases, religious intolerance remained as backdrop of injustice, like *Opium of the People*, Voltaire would have said. Christians massacred themselves in the name of Jesus, the same one who said: "If you are hit, turn the other cheek!" The Christian religion was then totally corrupted by these sectarian men who wanted to make believe that they practiced it faithfully. It was a courageous act on the part of this chaplain who had hoped to the end save these innocent people. But his encouragement was also reinforced by an infinite rage, an intoxicating rage. He could have suffered, for Contempt of Court, the outrages of the fanatical judge who had perpetrated these crimes. But the judge probably simply contented himself with blaspheming by sneering. He stayed concealed; proud, no doubt, to have defiled the Justice System of his adopted country by committing two crimes.

Mary Aylward was the first woman in Canada to be hanged alongside her husband.



-4-

A Justice in Holy Water

The Eleanor Power murder case, 1754

One evening in the summer of 1754, the setting sun of Newfoundland soaked the barely quivering waters of the magnificent Anse-à-l'Eau-Fraîche with radiant hues. Standing in the middle of a group of miserable fishermen, a woman in rags, a certain Eleanor Power, obviously in a state of advanced drunkenness, said in a low voice before a group of attentive drinkers:

— *My friends! I know where to find a fortune that would make us all richer by at least a thousand pounds!*

As she spoke, she looked like a conspirator while her fearful eyes tirelessly swept through the surrounding balsam fir trees whose dark robes may have hidden a sneaky whistleblower.

How can we imagine such an amount of money when one have never ever touched with fingertips the slightest banknote; when one had ever had in hands only small copper coins? A thousand pounds sterling! A fortune that these unfortunate papist pariahs, afflicted by a religion that kept them in an eternal and desperate poverty all over the British Empire, had difficulty to realize. Here you are! It would fill at least an oxcart with copper or brass coins... at least!

— *Where?* asked a hesitant voice, after a few seconds of silence.

—At judge William Keen's home,... where I used to work...



The North American Destiny of Eleanor Power and her companions of misfortune, all Irish by origin, bathes in a religious intolerance that abruptly contradicted Voltaire's angelic opinion in his *Lettres anglaises*. Despite his own investments in the English slave company South Seas Co¹, the French writer pretended to believe that Shakespeare's country was a model of democracy, tolerance and respect for human rights. In fact, it was the very intolerance of the motherland that so quickly populated the Thirteen American Colonies.

The population of Newfoundland was then constituted one thousand five hundred fairly rich Anglo-Protestant settlers, who were gradually eliminating the Beothuk² population of the island. This was one of six ethnic cleansings carried out by the Government of London³.

As far as Catholicism was concerned, there was absolutely no question of popish Irish being allowed to come and replace the exterminated Amerindians. This would have been to substitute plague to cholera. British

¹ •The name of the company carefully concealed that 98% of its turnover was produced by the terrible trafficking of slaves: *The Governor & Company of the Merchants of Great Britain, trading to the South Seas & Other Parts of America & for the Encouragement of Fishing*.

² •The very last Beothuk native disappeared in 1829, when Chanawdithit died.

³ •The other five were: 1) The *Highland Clearances of Catholic Upper Scotland*, camouflaged as economic change. 2) The refusal of serious international aid to Irish Catholics during the famous *Potato Crisis of 1850*. 3) The blankets contaminated by *smallpox* sold to the insurgent Indian tribes of Pontiac in 1764 in order to exterminate them. 4) The extermination of the *Aboriginal populations of Tasmania* in the mid-nineteenth century. 5) The *destruction of the Métis* civilization of Canada, which ended at Batoche in 1885.

Parliament was very anxious not to let the island be "popified" and become the twin sister of Ireland whose very recalcitrant inhabitants never ceased to rebel against the English occupation and the measures of dehumanization imposed on them.

Despite all these commendable efforts, an undetermined number of papists seemed to have managed to settle on the island, violating the bans of the Government of London. In defiance of all the incessant efforts of the authorities, the number of Irish Catholics in Newfoundland continued to grow. The cause was that, since the beginning of the XVIII Century, English fishing trawlers, *en route* to the Grand Bank of Newfoundland, systematically called at Irish ports to refuel *cheap labor*⁴.

At the end of the fishing season, most English skippers let Irish fishermen desert their crew. Thus, they could confiscate the wages traditionally paid on return. As a result, many of these poor travelers who had deserted to remain in Newfoundland had no means of subsistence. Like the poor Lazar of the Bible, they had to "steal the bread-crumbs that fell from the table of the rich." All this meant that the Irish community on the island of Newfoundland had acquired a solid reputation for thievery, and the richer English community on the same island was suspicious of them and treated them with racism and contempt, not realizing that it was they who made them contemptible and prevented them from becoming rich and respectable and taking away their rights through the Test Act.

These waves of invasion of these new lands by many believers can be compared to the current invasion of

⁴ • Cheap labor = proletarians, workers at very low wages.

Europe by crowds of poor people who see the new shores as a promising Eldorado. To subdue this scum, artificially held prisoner of poverty by the degrading laws of Test Act⁵, it became urgent to establish a real Justice Administration in the Newfoundland colony. For this repressive and punitive purpose, an educated man simply came to fill the function of an *itinerant judge*, once a year, during the cod-fishing season.

One of the island's Protestant families, the Keen, had migrated to Newfoundland in the early eighteenth Century, and had quickly grown rich. Having become prosperous bourgeois, the Keen had used their influence in the Parliament of London, where everything was for sale (even democracy), to obtain the permanent installation of a judge on the island. In this case, Keen-Senior and Keen-Junior held the first two positions of the Supreme Court.

To complete the administrative organization of the island of Newfoundland, the Keens wanted to curb illegal immigration and clean the island of its miserable Catholic population who was prohibited to stay in Newfoundland and consequently was reduced to stealing to survive. To carry out this work, the "*Council of Trade & Plantations*"⁶ of London called on an iron man, an Orange Governor (of Huguenot origin): Hugh Bonfoy, commander of a warship of His Majesty King George. It is well known that in all the religions of the earth the highly indoctrinated new

⁵ •The Law of The Test Acts prohibited Catholics from any employment in the Administration, any education, any trade, and any purchase of real estate throughout the Empire, even in Ireland where the population was almost entirely Catholic.

⁶ •These are the commercial and financial lobbies of London organized in powerful organization (Council of Trade & Foreign Plantations) that infiltrated the English Parliament and reduced it to its will.

converts are always more fanatical in fundamentalist cruelty than their co-religionists.

Bonfoy was therefore immediately appointed *Governor General* of the island of Newfoundland, an intermittent function for money-saving purposes. He only "governed" during the *cod fishing season*. Enhanced, since May 1753, with his new title of Governor General, the very young Bonfoy (34 years old) entered the port of St. John on July 24th aboard a brand new frigate (1747) of which he had just taken command, *HMS Penzance*.

Like a quarrelsome sheriff who flaunts his colts, the warship had raised all her gunports to let her threatening cannons point, whose dark mouth taunted the papist scum with their black eye. Beware, misbehaving *chicken thieves!* Without any possible ambiguity, its mission had been defined primarily as: "carefully monitor the Irish and make the first systematic census⁷" in the island. The Council of Trade & Foreign Plantations in London awaited the result of this first census with all-consuming anxiety, with as much fatalistic anguish as today's environmentalists are watching the thermometer of global warming.

The results of the census ended up throwing panic and consternation in the Protestant circles of the island: 2,683 Irish Catholics against 1,816 English Protestants⁸. "*This papist vermin proliferated like dogtooth!*" Fortunately, they did not have more rights to the electoral vote than the papists of Ibernia⁹! Otherwise...

⁷ ●Godfrey, Michael, "Bonfoy, Hugh," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 3, Université Laval/University of Toronto 2003—, biographi.ca/en/bio/bonfoy_hugh_3E.html.

⁸ ●Godfrey, *ibidem*.

⁹ ●Roman name of Ireland, not to be confused with Iberia.

Faced with these sad results and the black clouds that were gathering over the island's demography, the rich bourgeois were careful not to remove the discriminatory laws of the Test Act that rooted the Irish of Newfoundland in poverty, misery, and, consequently, in crime. Instead, they opted for outright repression, supported by a ruthless Justice System.

The Governor-General of Newfoundland was given all the powers, including the Local Criminal Investigations Directorate. In the hands of a military and religious fundamentalism, Bonfoy now controlled the three powers: *executive*, *judicial* and even *legislative* because he could decree what he wanted in the island; the ultimate dream of any dictator!

In spite of his discretionary powers, everything could have gone well if Bonfoy had possessed the spirit of Justice and Charity; the two Virtues advocated by his spiritual Master *Jesus of Nazareth*. Doesn't the word *integralism* (as in *religious integralism*) comes from *integrity*? A Virtue degenerated into a Vice in the reptilian brain of Man, because Virtue degenerates sometimes into Vice (and vice versa), if we are not careful.

Governor-General Bonfoy's sense of Tolerance and Justice can easily be gauged by the comment he proclaimed on his arrival in his inner domain: "Freedom of Conscience is allowed for any person except papists." As a result, he outright forbade the practice of Catholic worship. As in the worst days of the Soviet and Nazi regimes that plagued the twentieth Century, Catholic priests were banned from staying in the island. Houses occupied by Irish people in which a Catholic mass was celebrated, were confiscated and burned. Under no circumstances could the

Irish buy any parcel of land, or trade for their own benefit¹⁰. They were forced to remain miserable beggars in order to correspond to the idea that the rich population had of papism since the King Henry VIII had been refused the annulment by the pope of his marriage with Catherine of Aragon¹¹. And it was not only Governor Bonfoy who imposed these discriminatory excesses, simmered by the most sulphureous Orangemen, it was also the governors who succeeded him: Governor Richard Dorrill (from 1755) and Governor Sir Hugh Palliser from 1764 to 1768. The latter, even more despotic, forbade Catholics in Newfoundland to reside or simply to stay more than two in a house. Nor should Catholics move away from the harbor which had served as their home-port during the summer fishing. No! The *Magna Carta*, wrested from King John Lackland by the Catholic barons, no longer applied to papists!

Irish Catholic women had to prove that they were of good morality before landing on the island. What else to do but deliver her pelvis to matrons to prove that the sacrosanct hymen had not been torn by a thug, like the veil of the Temple in Jerusalem? Was it necessary for Mother Nature to be a misogynistic sneaky to place this treacherous informer in this confidential corner? Obviously, this famous Lady (Dame Nature) was a transvestite phallocrat! But foolishness had decidedly no limit; ten years later,

¹⁰ ● Godfrey, Michael, "Bonfoy, Hugh," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 3, Université Laval/University of Toronto 2003–, accessed October 10, 2013, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bonfoy_hugh_3E.html.

¹¹ ● Emperor Charles V, nephew of Catherine of Aragon, had threatened to plunder Rome if the pope allowed this annulment. Part of Rome was looted by the troops of Charles V as a warning. The pope, fearful, let the situation rot. Finally, Henry VIII killed his first wife by poison, and seized the goods of the English Catholic clergy which he distributed to his friends. After that, it became impossible to go back unless the property was returned to the Clergy, which was too complicated.

Irish Catholic children in Newfoundland had to be "baptized Protestants." It was a nightmare come true! As Voltaire wrote at the same time: "Nothing is more dangerous [for Freedom] than when Ignorance and Intolerance are armed with Power."



After this setting, this scenario in this Dante's Hell of human stupidity, let's now return to L'Anse-à-l'Eau-Fraîche to listen to Eleanor Power repeating her promises of wealth in front of a dozen scoundrels:

—Me, my friends! If you follow me, I will share with you the treasure of Judge Keen.... I know where it is!

—A thousand pounds sterling! A thousand pounds sterling!

All these wretches tirelessly repeated these magic words, their eyes shining with lust. It was more money than they had ever seen and would never see in their lives of unfortunate papists as fallen as the pariahs of the Indian subcontinent or the mysterious Pyrenean Cagots.

— Waou!... At the home of Judge William Keen! Where is he hiding it? asked one of them.

—That I will tell you only... if you want it to be taken.

—Come on! Tell us that! threw several drunkards.

—In a trunk! I saw it with my own eyes... He often went to rummage with a thousand precautions in a large trunk that he pulled from under his bed, in his bedroom. He was so

careful not to be seen that I immediately understood... that the chest was full of gold guineas.

From that evening, the villains, and reprobates of L'Anse-à-l'Eau-Fraîche were as haunted by the judge's trunk as a pack of bulldogs by bone marrow. Everyone dared to indulge in dreams of affluence and even wealth. What to do with so much money... that we don't have? The sweetest dream that the poor like to cuddle in their heads: to buy a mountain of beer to get drunk forever... and forget this life.

William Keen had become greatly enriched by his fishing company, in which only Irish people of insignificant wages worked. He became the center of all thoughts, the obsession of the Popish underclass of L'Anse-à-l'Eau-Fraîche, of all these idle soldiers, indolent servants and unemployed sailors, who dragged their skin in the dark and infamous bars of the port. However, until that year 1754, St.John's had not been the scene of any real crime that would have required a tribunal or rather a "Court of Oyer & Terminer" —an accelerated Court of Justice— according to the old French tradition of the Province of Normandy¹². Poverty was still only a secondary nuisance.



Armed with absolute powers, Judge William Keen had quickly become the terror of all those who saw laws as barriers to walling the poor, to locking them up in abject

¹² ●Court of Oyer and Terminer of Newfoundland. Court of Oyer (Hear) & Terminer (determine guilt) in old French from Normandy and some other provinces of France, imported into England by William the Bastard. This court of justice was active throughout the Empire, including the Thirteen American Colonies. It made it possible to speed up court decisions

misery, as was the Test Act... for the sole purpose of protecting the rich and the established order. The papists wanted to share everything. Sharing is always easier when you have nothing to give... and more difficult when you have everything.

Among the scoundrels of the island of Newfoundland, soldiers recruited in Ireland held a special place. The only Human Right that Catholics had in the British Empire was to die for the King of England, *as a rank and file*. Indeed, being Catholics, they were not entitled to any officer rank, even if they had been able to raise the necessary sum to "afford" an *officer's commission*.

In the hearts of all this Irish soldiery, there was resentment and even hatred, to realize that never ever they could get out of their mediocrity to become a successful officer, notary, physician, or merchants, unless they renounced their faith and converted to one of those Protestant faiths which considered themselves Reformed religions. The bars of their prison of misery were invisible because they hid deep in their brains.

The Governor General and Judge Keen were the best at whipping all those scoundrels of the island of Newfoundland, at having them incarcerated or even convicted for trivial reasons. Keen seemed to find pleasure in oppressing and overwhelming the soldiers. If he could, he would have subjected them to the same fate as the Beothuk, a genocide that historians and thurifers of the Empire willingly forget to mention. What is the point of tarnishing the glorious pages of this prestigious era, when German mercenaries died by the thousands to enrich Albion et maintain the greatness of the Empire?

Judge Keen seemed to appreciate permanent dispute with the soldiery. He had soldiers arrested and detained without even notifying their officers, at the risk of making them look like deserters, and letting them being shot for no reason. The skin of an Irish soldier was worth much less than that of a muskrat.

Judge Keen's son was also named William to give the impression of a princely dynasty. *Parvenus* need to invent a brilliant past and glorious roots. The son too had succeeded in obtaining the appointment of Judge. There was however often conflicts between father and son Keen, as both showed the same rage to inflict cruel punishments on poor Irish. In the minds of the poor, Judge Keen's name thus represented a kind of two-headed ogre. For some insignificant peccadilloes, soldiers and beggars were thus condemned to receive numerous lashes on their bare backs. As a result, the unpopularity of the two judges was at its height, and rumors of conspiracy were publicly disclosed, without any caution, and not without pleasure, all around L'Anse-à-l'Eau-Fraîche.



During the summer of 1754, the number of candidates for enrichment, eager to participate in this burglary, increased rapidly to reach a total of eight people under the guidance of Eleanor. The latter recklessly continued to "*build castles in the air*" by imagining the famous trunk full of gold guineas. All of them fantasized while drinking her stories, between sips of adulterated alcohol or bad doctored beer, brewed locally by unqualified hands.

Eleanor, who did not lack fearlessness and cold bloodedness, counted "her" men likely to bring their

indispensable support. No doubt, she could find twenty or thirty volunteers in a split second; but it would then be necessary to divide the loot into meagre portions that would bring each participant only an anxious ease. Sharing, after a successful burglary is always wonderful but very delicate. What a joy to be able to make five or six honest and respectable piles of gold guineas that sparkled in their poor tramp dreams! We then see ourselves becoming powerful, happy, respected. And woe to all those who have despised us before! They will pay for it! Were we going to become as perverse as all those rich people who persecute us today? I am afraid... Yes!

Eleanor knew she needed her husband Robert Powers, as well as a group of strong fishermen: Paul McDonald, Matthew Halluran, Lawrence Lumley, as well as a handful of soldiers: non-commissioned officer Edmund McGuire, and his men, who could eventually dispose of their war musket with its formidable bayonet. Eleanor made in her head the list of people she chose for her burglary, without realizing that by designating them for any *fortune*, she was condemning them to the *misfortune* of the gallows! All were pure Irish *Cú Chulainn*, all 18-carat Catholics, all more Catholic than the Italian Pope Benedict XIV who was then officiating in Rome with ideas a little ahead of his time.

Despite his prestigious halo as a non-commissioned officer¹³, Edmund McGuire did not require the direction of operations. Otherwise, it was likely that he would be excluded from the burglary. He preferred let Eleanor

¹³ Sous-officier or under-officer. The highest rank allowed by the Test Act for a Catholic in the English Empire. But when politics demanded it, the English High Command could appoint a Catholic to an officer's rank; for example during the Spanish Succession War.

Powers conduct the ensemble, with a master's hand. The strategy was carefully crafted. The first five plotters of the gang had to go by boat to the pier of the Keen summer cottage, at Quidi Vidi¹⁴. This village was a fishing hamlet located near the mouth of the fjord at the bottom of which nestled the port of St. John's, like a hermit crab in its shell. There all the conspirators would make their junction with the soldiers led by the non-commissioned officer McGuire. The boatman Nicholas Tobin¹⁵ would lead the plotters' boat. The plan was ready!



Everything went according to plans. On the way, Eleanor asked Tobin if he knew what was going on; and as he did not know, she began to reveal to him what the account consisted of. Eleanor was too talkative; she spilled the beans! Anxious to repair this indiscretion and keep Tobin *mute as a grave*, Lumley asked him if he wanted to be part of the conspiracy that would bring him fame and fortune, as much money as he would like until the end of his life. It's hard to resist such a temptation when you live between the hooked fingers of misery, like a fly trapped in the bristles of a spider!

The plotters landed at the *Quai du Roi*. With the soldiers, they went for an overview on the outskirts of the Judge's great residence. The vast courtyard was crowded with fish workers and local merchants who came to negotiate prices with the big boss. Everywhere, underpaid Irish

¹⁴ •Corruption of ecclesiastical Latin of poor quality: Quidn̄ Vidi = Why not have seen (this place). The site is very cashed.

¹⁵ •One of the probable descendants of this Tobin will be Prime Minister of this province when this island became a Canadian province.

workers sliced the fish into thin fillets ready for consumption. After observing from the corner of their eyes all this laborious agitation, each gesture of which enriched the Judge and still filled the famous trunk full of beautiful gold guineas, the conspirators surreptitiously gained a forest in which they religiously pronounced the oath, hand on the Bible, *never to betray the Conspiracy*. The burglary was postponed, according to Eleanor's decision. Tobin himself swore on his mother's head and on the Holy Bible that he would remain, for eternity, silent as a grave!

The second exploratory visit was made in the absence of the soldiers. Armed with a sickle, Matthew Halluran and the others simply came to reconnoiter and familiarize themselves with the surroundings, and then turned around. Did Halluran had to be filled with fear to equip himself with this knife, this sickle, which was later the cause of their hanging.

On September 9th, 1754, just as in Ohio, Colonel George Washington¹⁶ was capitulating at *Fort Necessity* (Ohio) to the French-Canadian soldiers of Captain Louis Coulon de Villiers¹⁷, the burglary operation began.

¹⁶ • The future president of the United States who gave his name to the capital of the country and to a bordering state of Canada.

¹⁷ • The officer of the Troupes de la Marine, Louis Coulon de Villiers, was born in Verchères, Quebec, in 1710 and died in 1757 in Quebec City. He was the brother of Joseph Coulon de Villiers, Sieur de Jumonville, who had been taken prisoner by George Washington at Jumonville Glen (now near Ontonagon, Pennsylvania, USA). Due to a lack of vigilance on the part of the colonel Washington, the prisoner Jumonville was murdered with a tomahawk blow by a pro-English Iroquois. In retaliation, Louis attacked George Washington's troop entrenched in Fort Necessity, Washington was forced to recapitulate and under threat of a death sentence for murder, he agreed to sign a document that acknowledged his responsibility for Louis' assassination. *The Jumonville and Coulon de Villiers Affairs* served as a pretext for England to start the long-planned Seven Years' War, since the English fleet had long blocked the Gulf of St. Lawrence in full peace to stop any reinforcements bound for New France, in violation of International Law. Ironically, during the American Revolution that followed the Seven Years' War, George Washington was appointed General of the French Army by

Matthew Halluran sent Tobin warn Robert and Eleanor Power at 3^{p.m.} o'clock that the burglary would take place around 10^{p.m.} o'clock that evening. Weather promised its best, and the moon, shy but complicit, would veil its lantern so as not to betray the thieves. Eleanor wore men's clothes.

At 10^{p.m.} they met Macdonald and Tobin at the end of the Keens' property. Around midnight the five soldiers, armed with two muskets and two bayonets, came out of the darkness, under the command of non-commissioned officer Edmund McGuire, who himself was a subordinate of Halluran.

A newcomer, John Moody, eager to take advantage of the fallout, joined them. But the famous *fallout* was not going to be what he had expected. The burglars then headed, at a wolf's pace, towards the judge's great residence. Three men grabbed the muskets and posted themselves for outside surveillance; one (Tobin) in front of the house to be robbed, and two others (Robert Power and Hawkins) in the vicinity of a neighbor, Edward Westland, who might have been curious. Macdonald also took up his position in front of Judge Keen's residence.

Thus, the edges were under close surveillance. During the operation, no one could intercept the second group of criminals or catch them *red handed* in the act. The latter entered the judge's property following Halluran and especially Eleanor who served respectively as chief and guide. The house's door was forced without any difficulty, garden side. Eleanor immediately led her troop to the big

the French authorities to avoid any conflict of authority with the French Army that had come to liberate the American Thirteen Colonies, and the French officers were appointed officers of the American Army.

trunk that was the subject of so many fantasies in the minds of all the wretched tramps of the region, unwisely dragged into this robbery.

The trunk was there, big dark mass as threatening as a big animal lurking in the shadows, and which seemed to wake up and shiver at the small trembling flame of the candle. Two men immediately grabbed the leather handles, and the trunk was carried outside. A revealing tinkling sound was distinctly heard. The thousands of gold coins, the famous sparkling guineas, thus tintinnabulated happily, as if happy at the prospect of finally becoming useful to poor people instead of remaining unnecessarily crowded so that the rich judge-trader could come, several times a day, to admire his mountain of gold like Harpagon and Séraphin Poudrier of Sainte-Adèle. Everyone could imagine the best, while trying to ignore the fact that it was the worst that could come out of this trunk like from the famous Pandora's Box. Finally, this heap of gold guineas—currency of the slavery of the Gulf of Guinea¹⁸—would soften the life of these few pariahs, these outcasts who suffered, not because of the color of their skin but for their religion. Man always seeks to invent differences to belittle others!

As the burglars wandered through the darkness, some of them appropriated a few glowing objects of copper or brass, betrayed by the fleeting brilliance received from the trembling candle. The trunk soon ended up in the nearby forest, which belonged to the same magistrate. The robbery had gone smoothly, and the group was already congratulating itself on the success of the burglary

¹⁸ •Originally, guineas were "pounds" (£) of gold, of course of greater value than pounds sterling made up of silver or gold metal.

operation, when the lid jumped under the butt of one of the muskets. It was then the general consternation:

— *Bottles of alcohol! Holy crap!*

The gold guineas had become bottles... almost pumpkins! Blasphemies of disappointment scourged the darkness, and the still intrigued moon discovered for a moment the face of its cloud chador to browse between the trees and glimpse what so enraged these disappointed thieves and snatched all these horrible words from them.

The trunk was none other than the Judge's secret hideout, from which he surreptitiously drew enough to feed his hidden defect: alcoholism. Discouraged, Eleanor and Lawrence Lumley quickly left the scene, abruptly abandoning the project. Unfortunately, one of the soldiers, John Munhall, did not want to consider himself defeated. He refused to give up all *his castles in the air* and brushed aside "failure" which he considered repairable. Whetted by the hope of wealth and encouraged by a long sip of cognac, he put himself at the head of the group of thieves.

Munhall decided that they were going to find the gold guineas or the pounds (£) of silver sterling. As for the hesitant, the non-commissioned officer Edmund McGuire threatened them with death as soon as he had finished checking that all of Judge Keen's vials of alcohol were not adulterated. He even regretted not having shot before their departure Eleanor and Lumley who had pushed them into such a mess and then abandoned.

The whole troupe then devoted themselves to drinking with zeal and obstinacy to console themselves from this much deplored abandonment, and especially to whip

their failing dreams contaminated by the destructive doubt. McGuire wanted not only to discover these guineas that made them fantasize so much, but also to avenge the Judge. Indeed, the sergeant thought he had a good reason to resent the magistrate. He had recently brutalized a Peace Officer, and this senior judge Keen had just sentenced him for this violence to deportation as soon as possible. But the magistrate had made the mistake of leaving him on provisional release, not out of the goodness of his heart but to save taxpayers' money, i.e. his money. Several heavily drunk men took over the surveillance in the vicinity of the residence, to avoid any surprises.

Among the burglars who broke into the house, Halluran armed himself with a sickle, and McGuire took his musket in his tense hands. Was it the fruit of fear? Probably! We know that fear is a bad adviser, especially when this poisonous plant is watered with alcohol.

The Camarde



The gang of thieves again entered the judge's house in search of the treasure, this time the real one. They climbed the stairs between the kitchen and the magistrate's room. Holding up the same trembling candle, Halluran lowered it to check if he would not find under the judge's bed the famous treasure or another even more promising chest. His imprecise gestures and flickering step, troubled by the ethyl fumes, caused him to hit the magistrate's bed:

—*What is it? Who is this?* whispered a sleepy voice. Then, after a few seconds of hesitation, understanding that malevolent intruders were besieging his bed in the darkness, he began to scream at the top of his lungs:

—**MURDER!... MURDER!... HELP!... MURDER!...**

Screaming, he struggled violently. So, lest he end up stirring up the house and the neighborhood, and especially by identifying the burglars, McGuire grabbed the sheets and blankets that the judge had rejected in his struggle, by his violent kicks, and folded them on his head to cover his face and eyes. Thus, in no case could he see the features of his attackers in the darkness, nor, more importantly, recognize them afterwards. But it was not done to reassure the old man who was brawling more and more with desperate cries:

—**MURDER!... MURDER!... HELP!... MURDER!...**

Scary screams never attract anyone, of course. No one came to his rescue. The households and the other members of the household remained very carefully caulked in their double-towered closed room, as long as the thieves occupied the house. If the magistrate had had the idea to shout "**Fire!**", everyone would have rushed out of the rooms and the burglars would have fled like rats before a shipwreck. But "**Murder!**" gave the opposite effect. The judge remained alone to face death.

In this case, the mortal Camarde did not carry any scythe as tradition dictates, but a simple rusted sickle. It was Private Matthew Halluran who played this metaphorical role. He had committed the recklessness of arming himself with a sickle, and he was frightened that these

screams would eventually stir up the entire neighborhood. Anxious to silence the noise, he gave in the darkness two sickle blows to the blanket that wrapped the body protrusion at the level of the Judge's head.

But the magistrate's desperate cries of terror did not falter. This judge who had coldly and simply sent many Irishmen to death, to the gibbets, deeply convinced that the Papists were subhuman, servants of Satan whom God had created only to do harm to Her Majesty's Protestant citizens, as He had created the Devil to direct them, this judge, therefore, completely lost his head under the blanket by finding himself before the Gate of the Underworld, just before death. Struggling in despair, in disorderly gestures, he managed to free himself from the blanket, extinguished McGuire's candle and even grabbed this same man by the leg. The soldier then hit him with his musket's butt. The judge lost consciousness.

Frightened by all these screams, the burglars began to flow back towards the door. They soon scattered like a pack of coyotes and blended into the darkness of the night.



The only lethal blows had been struck by the soldier Halluran. He had committed the imprudence of bringing a sickle, a formidable weapon among all. In the fray, two sickle cuts of medium strength had been delivered to the chief judge. The latter agonized about ten days and then died of septicemia on September 29th, 1754.

Emotion was at its peak throughout the Peninsula of Avalon¹⁹. At the 1754 request of the *Council of Trade and Foreign Plantations of London*, Governor Bonfoy sent a letter, on October 12th, to all the towns of any importance, asking for the erection of gallows throughout the island for the same purpose as the cross burning of the KKK: treat and menace.

"The gallows must be erected in the most public places... and persons who are guilty of theft, felony and similar crimes must be sent to these places to be tried at the Annual Court of Assizes²⁰." The crucifix is an instrument of Roman torture intended to remind Christians to act well, for Jesus suffered for them, and therefore they must behave well. It was decided by the English authorities that the gallows should also play the same role of warning in the island towards the Catholics: *Be careful, if you violate the established order, here is what awaits you!*

Needless to say, in these English Wars of Religions, there was more talk of outright elimination than of *Magna Carta Libertatum*, which did not apply to English Catholics because, as far as this religion was concerned, the Grande Charte was repealed outright by the famous *Test Act*. Indeed, if the authorities had planned judges, they forgot to provide lawyers and attorneys for the accused. In 1745 there was not a single lawyer in Newfoundland

¹⁹ The Avalon Peninsula is the easternmost part of the island of Newfoundland. Avalon was the Paradise of the Celts in the legend of King Arthur. He was sent there after his last battle (Battle of Camlann). It was ruled by the goddess-enchantress Morgane La Fée and her eight sisters, all of them skilled in the healing arts.

²⁰ ●Colonial Secretaries Letterbook, vol.2, fol.170, GN2/1/A, PANL. [Microfilm box No. 1], (1752-1758).

willing to take into account the defense of the Papist defendants²¹.

Sensing the rope coming, Nicholas Tobin told himself that to purge his own head, he had every interest in betraying his accomplices by bringing to the authorities, on a silver platter, the names of the burglars and the motive for their crime. The English Governor, Hugh Bonfoy, sent sheriff William Thomas, the day before the hangings, on October 7th, the instructions for check that the gallows were in place. Wretches and beggars were condemned even before they were tried. This reversal of the chronology reveals the objectives of the judicial authorities.

The Scottish historian Greenwood F. Murray wrote that "in the case of Eleanor Power, Governor Hugh Bonfoy had instituted an extremely strong anti-Irish policy²²." Therefore, the goal was not Justice, but outright elimination.

The *HMS Penzance*, Commander Bonfoy's floating bastille, served as a prison for those sentenced to death, as the authorities feared that Catholics, who occasionally demonstrated against the inhumanity of the Government's racist policies, would seek to release the nine accused Catholics.

The next day, October 8th, the chiefs Edmund McGuire and Eleanor Power, but also the simple executors

²¹ •In England itself "it was not until 1836 that persons accused of felony (as in the cases of Catholicism practice) were able to obtain the assistance of a lawyer or the possibility of consulting the evidence of the file." Cecil Roth, *Histoire des marranes*, Liana Levi Piccolo, *Histoire*, translated from Anglo-American by Rosie Pinhas-Delpuech, 1990; note 4, p.312.

²² •Greenwood F. Murray & Boissery Beverley, *Uncertain Justice: Canadian Women and Capital Punishment 1754-1953*, Dundurn Press, Toronto, 2000. p.35.

like Robert Power, Matthew Halluran, Lawrence Lumley, Paul Macdonald, John Munhall, Dennis Hawkins, and even the latest arrival John Moody, all those proletarians artificially maintained in black misery, found themselves in the dock to be judged "in bulk" like sub-humans.

The only one spared in the wave of arrests was the traitor Nicholas Tobin, the Juda of the group, who, to save his miserable head, had violated his sacred oath on the Bible. He was the only Prosecution witness and recounted in detail each other's role. He had presumably taken notes during the perpetration of the crime.

The Prosecutor read the testimony of two unqualified barber-surgeons —John Burton and Thomas Allan—who authoritatively claimed that the death came from the injuries inflicted during the burglary. In the defendants' dock, everyone pleaded *not guilty*. To Tobin's credit, he made a good point of the fact that Eleanor and Lawrence Lumley had left the scene after the failure of the initial burglary, long before the death.

Nothing helped. The absence of a lawyer sealed the fate of the Catholics. Moreover, it was not only the gallows that were ready before trial. Judge Michael Gill had also drafted his comprehensive and final sentence even before the courtroom opened, and he probably did not want to bother to rewrite it. In desperation, Private McGuire bravely tried to draw upon himself the fury of the Law in order to save the heads of his cronies. He stated that he was solely responsible for the disaster, because he had forced —on pain of death— all the others to participate in the fatal burglary. He figured as he was the only culprit, with Halluran who had foolishly armed himself with a sickle, as well as Robert Power:

—Power, McGuire revealed, *suggested murdering the judge, but I refused!*

—No, that's not true! John Munhall cried. *Power refused to come if they wanted to kill the judge! Me too, by the way!... And for this reason, I ask to be exiled!*

In fact, everyone asked for exile. Everything was better than the rope. All thought that the operation would be limited to burglary. The murder had occurred only by the absurdity of Halluran who, no doubt petrified with fright, had not only a sickle but a hatchet. His sickle was the direct cause of the death of the old judge but also the sole cause of the slaughter of the condemned, who would undoubtedly be hanged one after the other on top of the thirteen steps of the scaffold.

In thirty minutes of deliberations, the jury —so little unscrupulous as not to wish to dwell on the real responsibilities of each— decided on the general verdict:

GUILTY!

Judge Gill was finally able to read his expeditious sentence before going to supper:

"Condemned to be hanged by the neck until death ensues... May God have mercy on your soul" if he so wishes.

Nothing is worse than a hungry judge²³. In addition, Chief McGuire and weapon bearer Matthew Halluran

²³ •As the English poet Alexander Pope wrote in his *Maxims and Moral Reflections*: "The hungry judges soon the sentence sign; And wretches hang that jury-men may dine.

were entitled to special attention: the two corpses would be, following the execution, chained, and refilled in a public square at the choice of the Governor. Hanged twice! Not enough to shudder; only the first one hurts! The tenth accomplice, Nicholas Tobin, the Crown's only witness, who hanged the other nine, tried without a lawyer but before a jury, he was simply thanked for his fruitful collaboration. Thus, he saved his life!

It seems certain that even a lawyer of mediocre value could have easily saved Eleanor's head. Certainly, she had ignited the imagination of men on this imaginary fortune. But she then refused to go beyond the simple theft, and, for this, had abandoned the conspirators from the first failure of the burglary. She should have been convicted only of *simple burglary*, even though her responsibility was increased by the fact that she had been the victim's employee.

In the West, theft by a servant or former servant was considered to be intensified by an aggravating circumstance. Although Eleanor had played no role in the judge's murder, she had unwittingly led to the chain of events that led to the crime. She had pushed the first domino.

The Court of Oyer & Terminer dropped Eleanor's characterization as *murder*. Some historians and legal scholars today consider that this Criminal Court established in Newfoundland violated the English Constitution because, according to this Basic Law, a blood crime should have been tried in England. But it turned out that, thanks to the *Test Act*, *Catholics in England and in the colonies were not protected by the English Constitution, the Magna Carta of the Angevin King John Plantagenêt!*



As a result of these errors and failings, Eleanor Power was hanged with her husband Robert. This made some say that they were the first Canadian couple to suffer this indignity together. In reality, Newfoundland was not yet part of Canada and the Power family were not Canadians. Canada was still only one of the three provinces who constituted New France²⁴, and will remain so nine more years, until 1763.

Two men were hanged on October 10th, 1754. The next day, the Power couple (Eleanor and Robert), were executed in turn. As for the last five convicts, after years in prison in St. John's, they were finally released, on condition that they go into exile and never return to this Appalachian Island. This was the first known crime or at least the first murder trial on the island of Newfoundland.

But this expeditious judgment on the island, without any Counsel, any attorney, left Catholics feeling that they were in mortal danger under this intolerant and arbitrary regime. As a result, some Irish preferred to move and settle in New France. Shortly after the death sentence of these nine Irishmen, Judge Michael Gill, who had presided over the killing of the former, wrote to the Governor in exulting satisfaction: "*Many of the enemies of our Religion and Liberty are leaving our island*"²⁵.

²⁴ •Initially in any case, New France was made up of Canada, Acadia and Louisiana. Acadia and its valiant people had already been granted to England at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession. In 1763, it was Canada, while Louis XV, who no longer wanted to worry about colonies, gave Louisiana to Spain by the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau (1762).

²⁵ •Godfrey, Michael, "Bonfoy, Hugh," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 3, Université Laval/University of Toronto 2003–, accessed October 10, 2013, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bonfoy_hugh_3E.html.

Intolerance has always been the case. There is no religion that has not had its fanatics. "Everything seems excellent to us in what we love, and it makes us angry when we are shown the flaws of our idols. Men have a great deal to put a little criticism in the sources of their beliefs and in the origin of their faith."

So said Anatole France.

Homeless statue in Toronto. Its presence in a public park invites the public to donate food or clothing to the local homeless. Priv. Coll.





-5-

Cruel caning

The Elizabeth Workman murder case, 1873

On June 19th, 1873, Elizabeth was totally convinced that she would not see the summer so close. She missed it only by two short days. She was standing on the wooden hatch with a large hemp rope around her neck, and a huge noose against her left ear, which was going to break her neck and her vertebrae. Thus, this execution would spare her a slow death by suffocation. What perverse elf had therefore carried this young woman full of promise at the foot of this miserable gallows, under this hemp loop that nimbaited her neck like an evil aura? How could she get there? It is Destiny that distributes the cards of life, but it is we who play them. Elizabeth had played badly, very badly! Would a telegram arrive unexpectedly to save her life? Her native Scotland had been depopulated by ethnic cleansing inflicted by the London King¹. And if she did not want to die of misery in the desolate landscapes of Upper Scotland or in the proletarian multitude of Birmingham or London, Elizabeth Gaffield-Workman had now only one option: to flee far away, as far as possible, to the

¹ • The system of forced depopulation and dispersal of Catholic Celtic clans took place mainly from 1792 (Highland Clearances), when France, Scotland's first protector since the High Middle Ages, was mired in its own National Revolution in order to get rid of its parasitic aristocracy

New World, Canada, the land of milk and honey, a land of opportunity.



Elizabeth Gaffield had landed in our Canada, which had just been rid of its hordes of bison to deliver its fertile land to extensive agriculture. In the nineteenth century, thanks to the benefits of medicine, the European population had literally proliferated. Millions of European emigrants had colonized the world.

Millions of Europeans² had come to Canada to take the place of the Amerindians and Métis of America whose lifestyle had been sacrificed for the benefit of those arrogant strangers who thought they were superior beings³.

By the following century⁴, for all intents and purposes, European nations had almost ceased to reproduce themselves thanks to the freedom of choice to procreate, offered to them by this same European medicine. It was then the populations of the Third World who, thanks to the same medical progress, proliferated in their turn and came to replace in Europe the European populations annihilated by the freedom of procreation⁵.

In England, during the Industrial Revolution, the workers received a salary, but much insufficient to live on it. And even by making children work instead of educating them, families were immersed in the most widespread misery. The industrialists of England, inflamed by this terrible

² ●Mainly English, German, Italian...

³ ●According to the misunderstood theories of Charles Darwin.

⁴ ●The twentieth century.

⁵ ●A phenomenon known as « Great Replacement ».

economic upheaval, cared very little for these miserable workers "disposable at will", *disposable ad libitum*⁶.



In the blooming of her twenties, Elizabeth Gaffield had landed in Montréal sixteen years before that horrible June 19th, 1873. Her *old* newly married husband, James Workman, who was already in his sixties, became a farm labourer in the small village of Mooretown south of Sarnia on the green bank of the St.Clair River. Samuel de Champlain had called this Rivière Sainte-Claire because it was the day (August 11th) when he discovered it.

James Workman was a badass, a breaker who loved pure alcohol and violent quarrels, the slang of London's slums, of the underprivileged suburbs, and crunchy blasphemies. Elizabeth felt safe nestled under the armpits of his powerful shoulders. He had a son and a girl from a previous marriage. When his first wife died, probably of tuberculosis, he married the young Elizabeth, small, delicate, and polite. She was really the antithesis of her husband. Some women are irresistibly attracted to rogue men; perhaps to help them, or to be "protected"?

At first, everything was fine. Everything is always fine at first, because otherwise, we don't get married! Everyone *puts water in their wine*, so much so that one of the two sometimes ends up tipping only water, to complicate the metaphor. The more conciliatory of the two ends up bending entirely to the despotic wills of the most selfish. Elizabeth was doing her best to fulfill her role as mother

⁶ .●Disposable at will. *Ad libitum* = according to their will.

and wife. Everyone saw her as an ideal mother, a very devout Anglican; a tireless worker...

And in the evening, after a long day of exhausting work, she tried to play her role of fervent and passionate lover in the bed of the still green old man. But she felt with dismay that fervor and passion were abandoning her. If most women quickly get tired of the tributes of a young husband —90% of women, as the poet Georges Brassens pointed out—, what to say about the incessant and always unfulfilled attentions of an old man who smells the belching of juniper, fermented hops, and stinking tobacco?



Yet, when disembarking in the old port of Montréal, Elizabeth was certain to hold, in her left hand —the hand of the heart—, a *Royal Flush* that she could only shoot to win the *Dupe-Poker Tournament* that is the life of the poor. But the great age difference, which usually plays favorably when the oldest person is wealthy, generated for this miserable couple only a perverse pressure.

At the age when James should have retired and walk on tiptoe to be forgotten by the Camarde, avoiding all missteps in this minefield that is old age, he had to work hard to feed his son Hugh-Alexander born in 1865. He had belatedly fathered this child, one day when drunkenness had inadvertently distracted him from his usual vigilance, while he was fooling around in the love garden of his young bride. But *coitus Interruptus* requires strict synchronization and instant reflexes that were not compatible with Scotch whisky or Irish whiskey.

One says today that alcohol and car driving do not mix; a similar slogan on *coitus interruptus* could have been invoked. Thus, young Hugh-Alexander failed to make the Workman family happier. On the contrary.

The old Sarnia Jail and Courthouse on the east side of Christina and Durand Streets



Sixteen long years after their installation in Canada, the *Royal Flush* had been long-lived. The Workman's had lost the *Dupe-Poker Tournament* of life. Poorer than ever, they were still vegetating in a tiny two-room apartment on the ground floor of a house in Mooretown, a small farming community now melted into the vast conurbation of Sarnia, in the province of Ontario. But robust and brawling fellows sooner or later become puny and skinny, especially when alcohol and various drugs eat away at their health and vigor. Also, love based on physical robustness quickly sinks.

The despair of an early midlife and chronic poverty would lead young Elizabeth to a terrible gesture. She had

to free her life from this burden that her old husband had become. She now had a child to cherish. The old progenitor, softened and fallen, had no longer place in her heart. He kept her imprisoned in misery and evil, which desperately devoured her poor existence. But can we thus ignore the curse of an old spouse torn apart by the trials of a failed life, as one would abandon an old coat to the fangs of a wicked pit bull? This is probably sometimes possible, provided you do not choose alcohol and other artificial paradises, as forceps to facilitate the delivery of the solution. It would also be disastrous to give birth after absorbing a liter of cognac as an epidural. Elizabeth's choices were the worst possible. And all her desperate efforts, all the bad choices she made from there, were going to lead her directly to that terrible day of June 19th, 1873, under this aura of a noose.

Despite the presence of young Hugh-Alexander, testimonies irrefutably indicate that Elizabeth had long been subjected to violence —not physical but verbal— at the hands of old James, permanently in a state of advanced drunkenness. In the early 1870s, the young woman had already taken refuge several times with the neighbors above, the Patterson, to flee these intolerable assaults that seemed to start to go beyond the verbal (sexual). Yet, despite these successive abuses, the investigation revealed that young Elizabeth was still loyal to her husband.

Because, as poet⁷ says, “*from a certain age, one has much more reason to weep*”, James’ increasingly demanding addiction to drinking (to forget his decline), absorbed an ever more notable portion of family resources. Verbal abuse was only growing proportionately. He constantly

⁷ •The Perpignan singer-song composer and poet Bruno Caliciuri, known as *Cali*.

scolded and lectured his wife in very vulgar terms. Faced with this insoluble problem, the Social Service placed Mary (James' daughter), in another family for adoption, to remove her from this unbearable and traumatic environment. The age of this girl is not established with certainty.

Marie was only a child when they landed in Canada as destitute immigrants. She was about twenty years old in 1873 when her mother-in-law climbed the thirteen steps that would lead her to the top of this abominable scaffold. Yet, although domiciled in another Sarnia family, Marie had still insisted on keeping her father's surname, Workman, and refused to adopt the guardian's Swedish name, Skirving⁸.

She even kept some contact with her "mother-in-law", and after her father's death, Mary Workman-Skirving helped clean up the premises before the police arrived. She probably didn't realize that changing the site of a crime was also a crime. In any case, it seems a clear indication that she had stayed on good terms with her mother-in-law. Hugh —only eight years old at the time of these events— was the only *biological child* of this couple.

⁸ • It is also possible that it was not the love in favor of her father that prompted Mary to keep his English surname. In this era of imperial grandeur, English surnames were sought after because they provided unwarranted privileges in British society. But today, after the disappearance of the imperial greatness of England, people prefer other roots (eg German roots). Skirving means "diaphanous wings" in Swedish. Colonial discrimination in North America meant that English flags were more sought after. As a result, millions of immigrants anglicized their names. Despite these artificial transfers, the Americans who today claim to be of English origin are only in fifth place: **1-** Germans, 49,206,934, or 17.1%; **2-** Africans, 41,284,752, or 13.6%; **3-** Irish, 35,523,082, or 11.6%; **4-** Mexicans, 31,789,483, or 10.9%; **5-** English, 26,923,091, or 9.0%; **6-** Italians, 17,558,598, or 5.9%; **7-** Polish, 9,739,653, or 3.0%; **8-** French, 9,136,092, or 2.9%; **9-** Scottish, 5,706,263, or 1.9%; **10-** Scottish Protestants of Ireland, 5,102,858, or 1.7%; Total of the Celts already included (excluding the Welsh): 46,332,203, or 15.2%, in second place after the Germans. "Other nationalities" were not mentioned. Source: *United States 2010 Census*.

The decay, accentuated by the alcohol in which James Workman tried to drown his existential anguish, undermined his health. It considerably diminished his ability to work, *day by day*, as well as, it seems, what we will call his "marital vigor" (to remain in the canons of decency). He who already found too easily many illusory consolations in the *divine bottle*, began to drink more and more heavily to forget his growing problems which only worsen with age. Because if the youngsters sometimes are powerless to overcome the difficulties of life, the old are generally powerless at all. He had forgotten that alcohol is not a friend. It is a treacherous companion, even if it gives the impression of coaxing nightmares and anesthetizing the anxieties of the mind. Vicious circle.

When ethylic aberration combined its unhealthy forces with the suffering he felt when an obsession overwhelmed him for having missed his life, he couldn't help but blame his wife for the fiasco of his existence. Some men and women feel less lamentable by looking for the source and cause of their mediocrity in their loved ones. And they often end up believing it. This was the case of James Workman. He then began to abuse his young wife, verbally, sexually, and (later) physically.

As a consequence, his wife waited until he was totally drunk and therefore unable to defend himself, to beat him like a drum.

Little by little, violence became the usual setting for family life among the Workman. Faced with her old husband's growing inability to provide gainful work, Elizabeth began to work as a *housemaid for hire* in the village in order to obtain the necessities. And so, she found employment at a barber shop, whose owner was a *handsome*

black barber, so handsome that all the women in the neighborhood were very critical at her, probably with a hint of jealousy.



The upper floor of the house in which the Workmans lived was occupied by a couple, David and Sarah Patterson, who apparently lived a "good marriage", at least a satisfying relationship. They too were poor, for they had to subsist on David's meagre salary, an unskilled worker like his neighbor. Elizabeth confided a lot in Sarah Patterson.

Samuel Butler, the handsome black barber in the prime of his life, very extroverted and very sympathetic, played in this case the role of revealer, a role that almost cost him his life. At first, old James opened his door wide to him, especially when Samuel showed up holding in his generous (or sneaky, perhaps) hands a good bottle of Cognac, gin, or whiskey.

Young Samuel was in his late thirties. Upon his arrival in Sarnia, just three weeks before James Workman's death, Sam opened his barber shop and hired Elizabeth as a housemaid. As a result, some have not failed to attribute to him the role of *the last straw that*, according to the popular saying, *broke the camel's back* and triggered the drama.

The most important fact concerning the role of Samuel Butler in this murder case, concerned the color of his skin. Butler was a powerful and handsome black. May all the leftwing or rightwing fundamentalists forgive me for this detail. He was one of those great North American blacks, shaped by the ruthless *natural selection* of slavery

which only gave long life to the most robust, and which would undoubtedly have selected an ideal people if narcotics, alcohol, illiteracy, and racism had not spoiled part of this biotic success story.

However, shortly after his arrival in Sarnia, after benefiting from the "*Underground Railway*"⁹, the handsome barber had hired Elizabeth Workman as a housemaid, as we have mentioned. She had to take care of the laundry as well as the cleaning and maintenance of the hairdressing salon.

Thanks to this proximity, Butler soon became friend with the Workman family, to whom he began to make good neighborly visits to their place of residence. Knowing local customs, he did not come with empty hands. He often brought a bottle of "artificial paradise" in the form of whisky or cognac. These gifts were intended to please not only James, who could thus remain in the *Avalon* of drunkenness where suffering is abolished, but also Elizabeth, who had the opportunity to enjoy a moment of respite, as a mother who appreciates the sleep of a difficult child.

From the first visits, an insidious rumor spread in the country through streets and avenues, and even in the narrowest and darkest alleys. Yes! It's the rumor you are thinking now! An illicit relationship would exist between the handsome barber Butler and the young Elizabeth Workman. Jealousy is the salt of discord, and some women, prisoners of social taboos and narrow morality,

⁹ •The *underground railway* was a network of smugglers intended to facilitate the escape of slaves from the American Deep South to Canada where slavery was abolished. The expression is sometimes used in the case of the migrations of Jews and Nazis in the middle of the twentieth century.

would do everything possible to prevent their sisters from enjoying any freedom.

Although protected under Canadian law, the black citizens were far from being socially equal to whites in Ontario at that time. Some Yankees even argued that racism and racial discrimination were worse in Ontario than in the 37 US states of the time. But the perpetrators of these taunts were Americans, and they sought only to blur Canadians' criticism of *us apartheid* that already existed in the United States even before South Africa copied their model to create its own version: "Racism is more hypocritical in Canada than in our country," they claimed, "but it is in fact even more virulent." One only must read the story of Louis Riel and the Métis of the West to realize that the Orangemen of Ontario had nothing to envy in perversity to the hooded Order of the American Klan, or to Hitler's Nazis. It is even possible that the population of the semi-rural and impoverished area in which these working family lived were more prone to racial discrimination than urban areas. The "petty whites" are, it seems, more racist than the rich, who feel less threatened by visible minorities.

Dr. Egerton Ryerson¹⁰, Ontario's Superintendent of Education, felt that there was still an "*American behavior*" in our country with respect to people of colour, especially

¹⁰ ● Adolphus Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882) was a politician, educator, Methodist minister, and promoter of the school for all, including the famous Residential Schools (so sadly remembered) for Indians and Inuit, in fact distant residential schools held by the Anglican or Catholic clergy. Children were forced to reside far from their families in order to anglicize them as quickly as possible. Many boys and girls were sexually abused, and a few decades later the courts awarded fabulous damages to these victims, prompting many other applications for "compensation" that claimed to be abused by the system. The next generation also claimed government compensation from the pockets of Canadians, claiming that the abused parents had also abused their children, and in 2020, mass graves of children were discovered in the gardens of residential schools.

among rural people." This famous "*American behavior*" was actually a soothing description of racism. In the particular context of this sad story, the skin of the barber Samuel Butler must therefore be taken into consideration for having undoubtedly influenced the sad Destiny of Elizabeth Workman.

The arrival in the Reilleys¹¹ sector of this "*colored barber*", as the neighbor David Patterson called him in his deposition, changed the situation of the Workman spouses and precipitated the unleashing of events. Indeed, Butler, feeling sorry for his housekeeper, donated clothes to Elizabeth for her young child Hugh Alexander.

As for the old man his father, the barber also covered him with favors in the form of bottles of spirits. According to the *public rumor* spreading like a deleterious smell in the neighborhood and then in the city, this generosity was only intended to appease his anxieties and distract his attention a little too sustained with regard to the Virtue of his young wife who seemed to wish to take advances on her future happiness. The neighborhood started to gossip and criticize.

Moreover, a few days before killing her husband with a stick, Mrs. Workman revealed dizzily to a shopkeeper that "it took everything she earned to keep him in the swamp¹²." According to her own statements, so reckless that they helped lead her to the gallows, "Elizabeth wished to keep him bedridden until he died."

¹¹ • Sarnia lies at the extreme southern tip of Lake Huron. Reilleys is now a neighbourhood of Sarnia.

¹² • The swamp of whiskey, of drunkenness.

Obsessed, too, with the desire to forget his treacherous grief that tortured him insidiously, James Workman redoubled his efforts to keep even more his own mind in alcohol. The drop in the level of alcohol in his brain eaten away in bitterness and distress, plunged him into existential anguish. His deepest despair was to see that his life was coming to an end and that his wife whom he loved deeply would continue on her own path, on her own existence without him... His love was destroyed to the point that his daughter Mary had asked to go and live in another family.

Love is a divine perfection, an ideal as fragile as a rainbow on a soap bubble. As a result, when love enters the imperfect hearts of humans, it breaks in an instant. James Workman, old and necrotic from drinking, saw Elizabeth as his last lifeline on earth, while the latter, still young and desirable, knew that she could still carve out a decent life in the fragile fabric of a new Great Love, for, in the Lottery of Life, one always believes that the next draw will be the right one; and some become addicted to this Game of Chance. But you might as well want to trim a brand-new shirt in an old dilapidated jacket.

Between them, the future was impossible and hopeless, totally irreparable, for James was now too old, and they had trampled too much on their *love*, a crushed flower unable to bloom again. That is why Elizabeth strove to keep him at a satisfactory level of drunkenness, the only way for herself, and for him, to enjoy peace of mind and body.

When whisky didn't nail him to bed and didn't stop him from moving, James was desperately watching his young wife. He even sometimes went to the barber's home

in the hope of checking whether his obsessions were unfounded. He was so convinced of his misfortune that he apparently, never suspected that his certainties might be nothing more than a figment of his decaying, sickly imagination.

Peter Mayhew¹³, a neighbor of the barber, witnessed one of his surveillances. According to the witness' sworn testimony, the old Workman had gone to get his wife from Butler's house. She had come to clean the house, wash the laundry and, presumably, according to rumor and Workman's pessimistic opinion, even more:

—I saw Workman arrive at Butler's, on Thursday night between seven and eight o'clock. I heard a noise coming from the barbershop. I crossed¹⁴ and I saw James Workman. The latter tried to grab his wife and ordered her to go home. So, Butler intervened. He violently pushed Workman against the wall, telling him that if he didn't leave her alone, he was going to kick his butt. Workman answered something I couldn't hear. He let her go and Mrs. Workman went to get her shawl to leave with her husband. Workman has not been harsh with his wife. He simply grabbed her by the arm and told her to follow him. Butler pushed Workman against the wall and I saw his hand against Workman's throat¹⁵."

It was felt that, overall, the benevolence of the witness leaned more in favor of the jealous husband.

¹³ •Graphy of Maillou or Mailloux.

¹⁴ •The street or the space between two houses.

¹⁵ •This affidavit —like all other statements in this criminal record— is taken from the *Archives of the Ministry of Justice*, National Archives, Wellington Street, Ottawa.

On Tuesday, October 22nd, the old husband went again at the barber's salon while his wife was cleaning it. He ordered her to return home immediately. The young woman refused. Workman became angry, and at the husband's verbal abuse, Butler intervened again, grabbed the old man by the collar, and shook him a little without hurting him. James walked away, furious, muttering terrible threats interspersed with blasphemies and imprecations to enrage all the saints in Heaven. Again, Elizabeth ended up following her husband and going home.

From that moment on, she seems to have made the decision to no longer bear the tyrannical jealousy of her old husband. He had to leave her alone or... The testimony of little Hugh-Alexander describes the radical change in the behavior of his bullied mother:

—Last Wednesday, I heard my mother say that she had given a severe beating to my father. I saw my mother hit him with a broom handle in the morning. The barber Butler used to come to our house in the afternoon. He stayed late at night. I was going to bed long before he left. Sometimes they quarreled with Dad who was lying in the adjoining room. Last night, the barber again came to us. He had brought a bottle of alcohol... He gave it to my mother, and then he went to give it to my father in the bedroom. I overheard she told the barber that she had hit Dad and that she didn't want to sleep near him anymore.



From time to time, Workman got up and went out on the street when his wife was at work and whenever his blood alcohol level allowed him to keep the vertical station. He was then going to make some purchases and took

advantage of the opportunity, as we said above, to try to go and control his wife's actions. It was during these outings that the merchants could not fail to notice bruises and hematomas on the visible parts of his body. That's why Mr. Brooks, a local merchant, asked Elizabeth:

—I saw your husband, Mrs. Workman. He had blued on his hands, forearms, and face. So, what happened to him?

—He bumps himself everywhere all over the house when he is too much drunk. Ah! What a misfortune! He hits and abuses himself!

The answer was curious and even implausible, and the shopkeeper who had asked his question to carefully observe Elizabeth's bodily reaction, did not fail to report it to the police after the death of the old man. Caught off guard, the young wife was careful not to recount the misfortunes and punishments that she inflicted. But the acoustic insulation of the walls and planks was most precarious in these poverty houses with disjointed and poorly nailed boards. As a result, the Patterson could follow the daily *soap opera* with all its vicissitudes, its most scabrous adventures: slaps, blows of stick, bursts of voice, broken dishes, and various insults to make the hair stand on the head.

It was not without some satisfaction that the Patterson realized that the verbal aggression suffered by the wife had soon been followed by the physical violence inflicted on the old man when the young wife had begun to rebuff herself and to give blow for blow with interest and dividends.

Sarah Patterson, who had the immense advantage of not working outside in order to be able to follow each act, each scene of the drama and each line of the heavy dialogue. Around noon on Friday, October 25th, she could hear the beginning of a marital dispute which ended with two blows, two shocks, after which the house remained quiet until 2:00 p.m., at which time the chicane turned on again to end once more with two violent blows followed by a sentence shouted by the wife:

—*Did you have enough, now?*

The young son Workman later confirmed that his mother had beaten his drunk father with a broomstick. Other sets of stick blows were heard intermittently during the day. In the evening, calm had returned. But during the night, David Patterson could perceive a dying death rattle. Mrs. Patterson, who also listened very attentively, heard the two spouses talking in a normal tone, a calm manner during the night.

On Saturday morning, the discussion resumed, festered like a brush fire. Then, the bursts of voices ended, once again, with dry noises: a long series of soft and muffled knocks that seemed to be blows of a stick on a human body. Then everything became silent again. Peace seemed finally established in the household.

The Patterson then fell asleep, reassured, for a restful sleep. But they shouldn't have slept; it was the silence of death. Around 3:00pm, David Patterson was splitting wood in front of the house when Elizabeth approached him and whispered to him:

—*There is one thing wrong with the Father!*¹⁶ *Can you come and take a look at his problem, David?*

Patterson entered the ground floor apartment, and found Workman in bed, lying on his back. His more than swollen face was a hideous mass, deformed by bloody bruises, lesions and contusions. He put his arm under the head of the recumbent to lift it a little, his left hand on his heart. It wasn't beating. Everything was cold and even icy. He seemed to have stopped living some time ago. As he palpated his chest, he felt that the underwear was wet. Patterson's hand lifted Workman's head and slipped into his back, between the body and the cotton-flannel underwear. His hand got wet. It seemed obvious to him that the body had been washed. The right shoulder was black and brown as if it had been violently beaten. It was terribly swollen. Patterson noticed two cuts on the right temple and one on the left. The three cuts had the same notch and the same shape. The arms, the back of his hands and the fingers had been badly beaten.

Patterson did not examine the man's legs. However, he could see them after the doctor left, around 7:00^{pm} on Saturday. His shins had been like passed to the pestle and his toes seemed horribly crushed¹⁷. Stunned by the horror that emanated from this picture, and unable to touch any longer the body of the recumbent in such a degraded state, Patterson sent the boy upstairs to look for his wife. Sarah did a close examination of the victim and announced:

—*This man is dead!... No doubt, he is dead!*

¹⁶ •She called him *Father*, which further emphasized the generations' gap.

¹⁷ •« Awfully used up ».

Elizabeth then stood on the other side of the body, in front of Sarah, and called out to the corpse:

—*Father! Father! Answer me! Don't you want to answer me?*

—*No need to try!* Sarah said. *This man is dead!*

Elizabeth then had a withdrawal movement as if she was crying, but the Pattersons did not see a single tear. Sarah almost asked her how this could have happened, but she held back. Her question remains on her lips like a shy bird that hesitates to fly away. Elizabeth did not dare to bring up the subject herself. As if struck by lightning, David Patterson rushed outside screaming:

—*A crime has just been committed in this house!*

It was then that began an incessant parade of neighbors, devoured with curiosity, who sought to know what had happened. They came to see the body of the old man resting on the bed. They observed the bruises on the visible parts of the skin and cast furtive glances at each other that meant, "*You see! So, the incredible rumors were true, she killed him with a stick!*"

Then came Dr. Campbell, the local Coroner. Authoritatively, he took everyone out, friends and onlookers, to study in peace the scene of the crime. He carefully examined the body after undressing it. He found that the victim had several massive injuries to his head and chest. He then sent for Dr. Olliver and the local policeman. Elizabeth admitted without hesitation that she had beaten her husband with a broomstick. Believing she was excusing her action, she said:

—*It's true... I beat him to silence him... but I didn't beat him more than usual! I really don't understand why he died!*

Upon his arrival and after some conciliabules with forensic doctor Campbell, the local police officer proceeded to arrest Elizabeth. That same evening, a jury hastily assembled by the Coroner, decided that the victim had died of cerebral hemorrhage resulting from two very similar specific injuries. These two cuts had been inflicted by blows from *blunt* instruments, that is to say, *non-penetrating and probably metallic*.

According to Dr. Olliver, *it was a weapon other than a broom handle*. The neighbor, David Patterson, revealed that at around 4:00 a.m., on the night of Saturday to Sunday, he had heard noise outside the house. From his window, he had seen the black barber, Samuel Butler, leaving the house of crime. Around 6:00 a.m. the same morning, the barber had returned to leave around 8:00 a.m.

The *Coroner's Inquest*, or Preliminary Investigation, eventually concluded that "*the victim, James Workman, had died of excessive violence, and that there was every indication that these abuses were inflicted by Mrs. Workman, the wife of the victim, or by Samuel Butler, or by both.*" These conclusions highlighted that, every evening and each night of that last week before his death, the above neighbors, the Patterson's, had been able to hear the sound of stick-beatings, and, in response, insults uttered by Workman under the influence of alcohol. Each invective and each series of blows were followed by cries from Elizabeth who aggressively asked her husband "*if he had had enough, or if he still wanted more.*"

The situation was becoming extremely serious for Elizabeth. The neighbor Sarah Patterson said under oath that the victim, the old Workman, had drunk a lot during the last two weeks before his death, that is, since the barber had hired Elizabeth as a housemaid.

—I did not see Elizabeth beat her man, said Sarah. She simply told me, one morning, that she had given "a good one" to her husband. Moreover, that first night, I heard her ask her husband twice, if he had got enough. I was afraid that it would end up falling back on her! On Friday afternoon, I heard Mrs. Workman tell her husband: "Have you not had enough yet?" The old man, literally tortured by jealousy towards Butler, would fight back with nasty names to which Elizabeth replied every time she left room:

—Oh! If you haven't had enough! You'll get even more!

Then, more enraged by new invectives peppered with blasphemies, she returned to the bedroom to beat again the old man, already in agony. And every time she entered that room where James lay, the neighbor could clearly hear the stick beating like a metronome. The old husband kept telling her that *she was killing him*, but she continued to strike like a lunatic who wants to cast out a demon, a haunting nightmare that drives her crazy, like a slave who wants to break the chains of slavery.

—I told my husband that evening, Sarah Patterson continued, that Mrs. Workman had violently beaten her husband!

—She would be unable to do so! the man replied in a detached voice who seemed uninterested in the deeds and gestures of his neighbors.

—*She just did it!*

At that very moment someone knocked on the door. It was Mrs. Workman. She had gone up to her neighbors' apartment through the *fire emergency staircase* that served as direct access for the tenants. She brought them a cup of pickles. It was an excuse to find out if they had heard anything. David Patterson was present at the time.

—*Did you hear what happened at my house?* she asked.

—*Almost not!* Mrs. Patterson lied. She did not want to admit that she was listening at the doors. Elizabeth then explained that she had given her husband a good beating¹⁸ "*which he would remember for a while,*" while he insulted her with all the names.

On Friday morning, James Workman, who remained inside, closed the door on his wife who had gone out to talk with her neighbor. Elizabeth begged him for a long time to unlock the door:

—*Come on, Father, open the door; Let me in! Come on, Father!*

He eventually opened to her. The scene showed that she knew how to take her old husband by good feelings when she wanted to.

Sarah Patterson explained that when she went down to the Workman's apartment on Saturday afternoon, at the request of their child, the old man's body was already cold and stiff.

¹⁸ ●She said : *Severe blows.*

—In my opinion, James must have been dead for at least four or five hours. His left shoulder was all black with bruises. His arm was all swollen. His legs were also covered with bruises, his feet and toes likewise, heavily swollen.



As for the barber, no one was able to prove that he had participated directly in the murder. On Friday morning before Workman's death, Patterson heard, at around 4:00 a.m., a person pulling his boots into the apartment below¹⁹. He thought the noise was too loud for being the young boy's shoes. Maybe it was Workman who got up to go about some butchery tasks?

David Patterson, who also gave in to curiosity, stood at times on the landing, at the top of the stairs²⁰. He saw a man climbing the dike, who surrounded the house built in a ground depression, below the street. He seemed to recognize in the darkness the barber Butler who was leaving the house and sneaking into the night. How to be sure? The neighbours, who were always very well informed, had noticed that people (without specifying the number or gender) used to make short visits to Elizabeth Workman, especially when her husband worked in Point Edward or some distance from his home. Among these evening

¹⁹ ● In Canada, politeness requires taking off one's shoes when entering someone's home and staying in socks.

²⁰ ● The ground floor apartment (the Workman's) had two doors; the main door to the street, and a side door that opened to the side of the house. This last door was located under the landing of the external staircase that allowed Patterson (from the upper floor) to have a private entrance and to flee in case of fire. The Patterson's had to stand on their cornice landing to see part of the Workman's living room.

visitors, a shoemaker had been specifically identified... And it certainly wasn't to reseed his shoes.

Dr. Edward Olliver, forensic pathologist, did the next day, Sunday, the *post-mortem* examination of the victim²¹ at his own home. Obviously, appearances showed traces of bruises and abrasions at the two lower ends [the feet]. The right side of the body was very swollen and discolored. The blows to the head had resulted in *blood extravasation*²² in the brain.

He wrote without any superfluous lyricism: "A scalp wound of 1.5-inch length [almost 4 cm] marks the left temple. A fracture of the nasal bone affects the left eye. A blood clot is formed in the brain under the same fracture. The cut inflicted above the left temple pushed the cranial bone. The scalp injury was caused by a sharp, sharpened instrument, like a butcher's instrument. The fracture of the nasal bone is more serious than the other, because, in addition to the fact that it caused extravasation, it led to damage to the brain itself. A textile fragment introduced into the brain forms a foreign substance in this place, so that an almost instantaneous death ensued. Only immediate medical help would have saved his life."

The coroner was of the opinion that twenty to thirty blows of the stick had been administered to the legs and trunk, and that "the legs had been tied with a rope." The abrasions were likely caused by the victim's efforts to get rid of this ligature. The blow to the temple had been the last one. As a result of this final blow and the one on the

²¹ • The doctor's statement is available at the Federal *Archives of Justice* in Ottawa.

²² • *Extravasation* or *extravasation* was a physiology term that once referred to a hemorrhage or effusion of an organic fluid—in this case *blood*—out of its natural container.

nose, the victim had to die instantly (or within 12 to 24 hours only) in a comatose state and without being able to express a single word.

According to the medical examiner, these blows were therefore sufficient to cause death. As for the empty stomach, it contained only a little fluid. The victim had taken no food during the twenty-four or forty-eight hours preceding his death." For the forensic doctor, the causes of death were undoubtedly the blows of the stick that had been administered to him.



As soon as the death was announced to the general public, Elizabeth Workman was immediately locked up. An *arrest warrant* was also issued against Samuel Butler, because, as stated above, it was rumored that he was her lover, and therefore probably her accomplice. Both inmates were immediately transferred to the Sarnia County Prison.

On March 21st, 1873, the co-accused appeared before Judge Wilson. The magistrate, born in Edinburgh (Scotland) in 1814 and immigrated in Canada in 1830, had become strongly involved in business before entering politics and then the judiciary to vary and revive his sense of success. The money had enabled him to acquire political and judicial power. Wilson quickly became famous for the harshness of the sentences he imposed on offenders. He seemed to totally forget that his own people (the People of

Scotland) had suffered greatly from the tyranny and excesses of English colonialism²³.

The guilt of Butler, the alleged lover, was not so clearly established. The man categorically denied having been present at the Workman's home at any time, on Friday night and even on Saturday morning. Elizabeth agreed, in opposition to David Patterson, the neighbor, who claimed to have glimpsed him in the darkness. But, under the pressing and insistent questions of Me. A.J. Mackenzie, the barber's lawyer, Patterson suddenly thought he remembered that it was **not** on Saturday but on Friday morning that he had "seen the barber surreptitiously leave the house of crime, at dusk."

Judge Wilson then ordered Butler's outright acquittal against whom he felt unable to establish any sufficiently substantiated indictment scenario. With regard to Elizabeth Workman, defended by the same lawyer Mackenzie, Judge Wilson, who had not fully grasped the difference between the role of a judge and that of a Prosecutor, found it totally obvious and indisputable *the theory that it was at the hands of his young wife that the old husband had lost his life*. The only point to be clarified was whether the wife had killed her husband *voluntarily or not*, and he intended to succeed in proving beyond all doubt that his action was *deliberate, intentional, and, therefore, premeditated*.

For the Judge Adam Wilson, it was a first-degree murder that could only end with a hemp rope. The only point that the Defense lawyer could have stressed was that the judge thus played the role of Prosecutor instead of sticking to that of Judge, that is to say of *arbitrator*,

²³ • See the *Highlands Clearances*.

anxious to keep the search for the Truth within the limits of the Law and Criminal Procedure. Sensing that the jurors might recommend *Clemency* in Elizabeth's favor, as she was a woman, the Judge urged them to be fair, and therefore to the same severity as if it had been a man who had killed his wife under the blows.

According to the Judge, the victim had been beaten to death for hours, and her goal could only be the desire to kill her husband. It was a specific case of *premeditated murder in the first degree*. In his opinion, it was "*an assassination or nothing at all*". Contrary to the supreme magistrate's recommendation, the jury returned with a guilty sentence, but with a firm *Recommendation for Clemency*. Furious, though he refrained from publicly expressing his anger to avoid appeals in form for *unfair behavior*, the judge, inflexible, ignored them and condemned Elizabeth to death. This can be considered as an infamous blunder on the honor of this magistrate and that of Canadian Justice as a whole.

By going through all these criminal files, the attentive reader will have noticed that these defects of form, formal defect, this kind of stain of infamy in the judicial procedure, were frequent in English Canada. In Anglo-Saxon countries, Judges are appointed by political favoritism for having grenillated in the ruling party²⁴. There is not any well-defined National School of Magistracy as in several countries of the world. Not wanting to appear less odious than the Judge, the Minister of Justice also refused to intervene in the Appeal.

²⁴ • Except in the United States where they are elected by the general public and must, for this, proceed to an electoral campaign with its procession of empty promises, crypto-alliances and smears.

Despite these denials of Justice, lawyer Mackenzie persisted in launching several petitions, which were rushed to Ottawa because the execution of the death sentence had been set for May 19th, 1873, with the obvious aim of shortening the problems of contestation. The attorney highlighted the fact that the convicted person was a female, and that, for this very reason, it was not appropriate to subject her to the full rigor of the law; which was a very clumsy argument if we consider the principle of gender equity.

Eventually, the death execution was delayed by one month to take into account the fact that a late decision of commuting the death sentence to life imprisonment would perhaps be taken. Sarnia City Council, furious that a woman could be hanged in their city, made a final request to the Government of Canada. The Councillors explained the fact that, a few years earlier, a certain Robinson had been sentenced to death in Sarnia but that his execution had finally been annulled. All this had cost a lot of money for nothing! As a result, the Council refused to endorse an execution, let alone that of a woman. It was a mere pretext.

A Sarnia municipal delegation went to Montreal to present its strongest objections to Prime Minister Macdonald. The delegates left satisfied with the meeting and the assurance they had received from the ministers. Volatile politician's promises! What was not their disappointment on their return to Sarnia when the same delegates learned that the date of the execution had not changed *one iota*. Elizabeth was to die on June 19th! My Goodness! All these

politicians held double speeches as artificial and deliberately equivocal as those of the auctioneers²⁵!

In 1869, the federal law of the newly created Canadian Confederation had changed the authorization for public executions outside prison walls. From now on, executions had to take their course within the prisons themselves. The procedure remained public, but the number of spectators would be limited by the space available in the courtyard. This avoided rebellious mobs. Each official guest had to receive an invitation with black border.

The purpose of this restrictive law was to prohibit access to troublemakers, protesters, rabble-rousers and other abolitionist dreamers who had noticed that the "*Thou shalt not kill!*" of Moses' Fifth Commandment, was in total contradiction with the Pentateuch's "*an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*". There was indeed a paradox. But, even more, the execution of a woman risked leading to further violence by activists and opponents who believed that only men should be subjected to the death penalty. Women, *Progenitors of Humanity*, should be spared no matter what they did, as were children.

Many riots usually accompanied the executions of females. The Movements that we now call *feminists*²⁶ opposed themselves to the execution of women, without realizing that the illogicality of this double principle of punishment itself contributed to inequality. On Saturday, 12th

²⁵ ● Allusion to the double-talking of the country's auctioneers, intended to deceive novice buyers about real prices.

²⁶ ● The word "feminist" already existed in the nineteenth century under the pen of Alexandre Dumas-fils. He had borrowed it from medicine where he characterized a "neutralization of sexual difference" in men. It was therefore an adjective that applied to a man whom we will now describe as effeminate. [Geneviève Fraisse, *Les femmes et leur histoire*, Gallimard, Paris, 1998.]

of June 1873, a telegram arrived from Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, who was staying in Montreal with the Governor General of Canada, the Comte de Dufferin, the same one who bequeathed his name to a terrace in Québec City²⁷. Justice had to take its course. The execution of a woman would take place, in all its horror. Official invitations, black and white cards resembling death announcements, were to be purchased at the sheriff's office. Only a few people asked to witness the execution of Elizabeth Workman who was very unpopular, if one considered the horror of her crime. The scaffold was erected in the back of the courtyard of the Sarnia Penitentiary Centre. A tomb was dug just below the platform. A poorly squared wooden coffin was placed in the pit to receive the remains and make them disappear from the surface of the earth.



On June 19th, therefore, Elizabeth Workman stood on the wooden hatch with a large noose rope around her neck. Under her hood, she thought intensely of all those events that had led her to stand there, straight, on top of this little Gate of the Unknown. She was very calm, the calmest person of the audience. She waited for death with courage. Few humans have the strength of character and pride to face Death by looking it straight in the eyes, like the soldiers of the distant past who had to stand motionless under the artillery fire from enemy, without retaliating, without moaning. All those soldiers had to stand straight, while their friends were being struck down all around.

²⁷ •The Dufferin Terrace dominates the magnificent panorama of the St. Lawrence at the Traverse de Lévis in Quebec City.

Were they praying? Probably! And the atheists themselves prayed to an uncertain God. In case!

Elizabeth held in her right hand a bouquet of daisies, as if to offer them to God by suddenly appearing before him, in the hope of coaxing a little this Master of the Universe, always ready to blame, penalize and punish all those who had revolted against their terrible life that the unfair Providence generally reserved for the poor, while it spoiled the rich with superfluous benefits.

The executioner, who came from Toronto, was not wearing his hood. He had simply blackened his face like a hard-working *charcoal digger*, to conceal his identity, or like a turbulent scoundrel on Halloween to shout "*trick or treat!*" Suddenly, the county sheriff sketched a slight wave of his hand. It was he who insisted that the death penalty be commuted to perpetual imprisonment. His spirit was indignant at having to lead a woman to the gallows and especially at being the Supervisor of Execution.

At the sheriff's discreet signal, the executioner pulled the shutter release and the woman fell into the hatch with a dry snap. Elizabeth instantly lost consciousness, her neck vertebrae broken. She remained hanged for twenty minutes. After which, the Coroner's Court A.W. Gamble, examined her carefully to spot on her body now calmed, the slightest trace of life. She was finally declared officially deceased. She was buried under the scaffold itself, with his small bouquet of flowers in her clasped hand as if her God had refused the offering and His indulgence.

A journalist from THE TORONTO EVENING MAIL, an attendee witness, recounted the last scene of this tragedy. "It was almost 9:00 a.m., Elizabeth, standing on the fatal

hatch through which she was going to disappear, lived her last moments under the magnetized eyes of the fifteen spectators invited. The fear of Death and the Afterlife fascinates humans. Seeing others die awakens in each of us a feeling of horror and pity, so much so that, during each hanging, we always find a few spectators who cover their faces with their hands. And afterwards, all of them feel the deep desire to enjoy every second of existence they have left to live; as after a fatal accident that would spare them.

However, the repetition of a lamentable spectacle ends up creating in the involuntary spectator a protective shell of habituation. The sensitivity of the hangman and especially of the prison guards who sympathize with the despair and suffering of the convicts, fades with the times. This was particularly the case at the Bordeaux penitentiary, whose rate of executions remained high. A guard at this Montreal prison wrote that, "from one hanging to the next, there was no more astonishment on my part. The condemned followed one another at the gallows and they all had, with almost no differences, a similar behavior. All of them thought they were having a bad dream that they didn't hold the key to. All of them cultivated hope, hoping for a miracle²⁸."

But let's go back for a few moments to evoke a last fleeting memory of the same author. While Elizabeth Workman waited for death, standing on the trapdoor, her clenched hand squeezed between her bloodless fingers the small bouquet of white daisies, she "spoke for the last time, expressing the hope that her case would serve as a warning to all women who were victims of alcoholic husbands, and to all husbands who had to endure a wife who

²⁸ •Duguay, 1979, p.93.

got drunk. The signal was then given... When the rope was finally cut, the body fell six feet lower into a pit that had been dug to accommodate it (Sic!) ... The handful of white flowers that Elizabeth had brought from her cell to the gallows, remained in her clenched hand. Other flowers were placed on her heart, while the fifteen-spectators²⁹ watched the tragedy with confused emotions, perplexed as to the guilt of this young woman. Did she really deserve the punishment that had been inflicted on her³⁰?"

Elizabeth Workman was not the only Canadian hanged despite a pardon recommendation issued by the Council. Let us remember Mary Aylward. In his rage to punish others, the judge had not respected the will of the Sovereign People, So, it can be said that, for Elizabeth Workman, Justice was not at the rendez vous.

The small train station of Bordeaux in the suburbs of Montreal. It was the last stop for many criminals before the Grand Voyage. Private Coll



²⁹ ● There were 400 for the previous execution in that same prison yard, 11 years earlier, when Thomas Cleary had been executed for stabbing his best friend after celebrating too much in their employer's tavern.

³⁰ ● "Execution of Mrs. Workman for The Murder of Her Husband: The Last Scene" *Toronto Evening Mail*, June 20, 1873. page 1.



THE SARNIA JOURNAL August 27th, 2015. Photo courtesy of The Lambton County Archives, Wyoming. Holland Paisley Photographic Collection. The prison is burning.

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Pick the roses of life, before it's too late!

The Emilie Hilda Beauchamp Blake murder case (1899)

Emilie Hilda Beauchamp Blake was born on a cold and wet January day in 1878, in Chedgrave near Norfolk in England, into a very poor family. She was the daughter of a county policeman. Her parents probably died of tuberculosis when she was just a child. This chronic disease was ravaging Western Europe¹.

With her brother Arthur, she was raised by an older sister. When the latter married, Emilie and her brother were abandoned and placed with the *Abandoned Children* at *Theeckingham Workhouse*. These terrible Workhouses (hospices with forced labor) denounced by novels such as *Oliver Twist*, were totally privatized. What the French called *Public Assistance*, was in England *Private Assistance* because the owners forced the poor to work very hard simply to have the right to accommodation and soup. The owner, often an aristocrat², saw this as a legal way to

¹ • One in seven deaths was then due to tuberculosis, until the invention of the BCG vaccine in 1921 (Bacille de Calmette et Guérin).

² • Thus, the director of Heckingham Workhouse was Lieutenant Sir Richard Beauchamp Duff, owner of the land on which the Child Abandonment Centre was built. During World War I, this nobleman participated as general in the Mesopotamian Campaign in which the English attempted to seize the oil-rich regions of the Ottoman Empire, while the French provided the main effort against Germany in Europe. But the campaign against Baghdad ended badly in 1915 when the British Army (General Townshend) capitulated on April 29th, 1916 at a cost of 12,000 killed; largely soldiers

make his fortune grow strongly. For one year, he received a government subsidy in addition to the added value of the orphaned worker or foundling. After a rigorous one-year cycle, Queen Victoria withdrew her subsidy, and the aristocrat boss rushed the child to "exportation" to make way for a new abandoned child who entitled the workhouse' owner to a new government subsidy.

For the children, it was a second abandonment. All these children, thus rejected by the authorities, were then taken over by a second group of traffickers —domestic traders—who grouped them together to ship and sell them in retail to the highest bidder in one of many British colonies. Railway stations throughout the Empire served as a "market for servants." There, wealthier people could come and acquire a child for housework, farming, manufacturing, or other work. Thus, England no longer had the financial burden. The price of a child included the costs of maintenance, travel, and the profit margin, which alone encouraged the domestic trader to continue his trafficking of human beings. All of this was strictly in accordance with Britain's *Poor Law*.

Actor Charlie Chaplin lived several times in an English workhouse at the very end of the nineteenth century. His mother was not only too poor to feed him, but mentally ill. How can we not lose reason when life is an ordeal? Chaplin, who was not abandoned definitively as a simple

recruited from India and Scotland. This was one of the serious disasters of the English Army. Beauchamp Duff was relieved of his duties for having shown little will to help and, on the other hand, some decisiveness to hinder the energetic continuation of the campaign.

Pick the roses of life before it's too late

*champi*³, was fortunate not to be shipped far away and sold in the colonies as the heroine of this tragic story.



What is left of Sir Richard's Heckingham Workhouse. Private Collection.

Emilie was nine years old when she was abandoned, with her brother, in the workhouse in Heckingham. Sir Richard, owner of several such facilities, kept them for only one year to multiply his profits by obtaining new children. In May 1888 Emilie, aged 10, and Arthur, her brother, were shipped to Canada, to the care of Arthur Broadhurst, a trader in domestic servants. Each year, he escorted 80 to 90 children to speak only about Manitoba. Emilie was detained for a few days in the new railway station in Winnipeg⁴ where she was "*acquired*" by a family from the new province of Manitoba which was then only in its 18th year of existence.

³ •The *champi* (feminine champisse) was first a child abandoned in the fields, and, by extension, a child abandoned at all.

⁴ •CPR Weston Yard Station, also known as Rugby Yard, built around 1871.

Emilie's brother, Arthur, had found buyer in another city of Canada, Montréal. Later, Broadhurst remembered Emilie as a quiet, well-behaved little girl, always seeking to win the affection of those around her, for lack of love.

A couple of new Canadians from *Elkhorn*, north of Brandon, Manitoba, Laetitia and Alfred Stewart, became the foster family of Emilie and another girl deported from England. The Stewarts themselves had only been in Canada for seven years.

England thus found a triple advantage to this human trade. This country was getting rid of its poor because it was the time when the German Empire wanted to become a great colonial power and was building a powerful High Seas Fleet endangering the maritime hegemony of the English Empire. To balance each and every dreadnought-battleship launched by Germany, England built *two* war vessels (dreadnoughts) in order to maintain its colonial dominance.

We must remember that the growing power of Germany threw terror among the English; especially after the release of the two novels of the Londoner William Le Queux⁵. After having been for centuries the ally of the

⁵ • The two horror novels were *The Great War in England in 1897* (published in 1894), and *The Invasion of 1910* published in 1906. After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, which resulted in the defeat of the traditional enemy (France), the English watched in horror as a new nation emerged, the German Empire (the Second Reich), obsessed with a desire to acquire a colonial empire. How to create a new colonial Empire without cannibalizing that of England, which had planted its flag almost everywhere as a monopolizing trader? Anxiety turned into panic in 1894 with the release of the first novel by Le Queux which announced an invasion of England for 1897. Where to find soldiers to defend England when we know that traditionally it was German mercenaries who fought for the English Empire, *General Conscription* being impossible in Shakespeare's country? Immediately, British diplomacy approached France so that France would serve

German princes of the Holy Roman Germanic Empire against France, England will therefore move closer to its hereditary enemy, France, in order not to face, alone, the bellicose Germany. So the French and Belgian battlefields served as *glacis* for England during the two world wars. But all this naval armament was very expensive for England's public finances, and the nation no longer had the means to take care of its poor. UK expelled them to the colonies, Australia and especially Canada. Thousands of

orphans (80,000) were thus delivered to Canadians who wanted servants. And multitudes of these poor children were exploited, abused physically, morally, and even raped.



Emilie Hilda Beauchamp Blake

In this Stewart family, which was already raising five offspring from a first marriage of Madame (a widow), it was not without

reluctance that the children agreed to share their meagre food rations with two new mouths to feed, even if the only function of Emilie and the other orphan was to help the lady to raise her family. Emilie thus became a totally free *multi-functional maid* (or even a *Jack-of-all-trades*), under the pretext that the Stewarts had *invested* a large sum to acquire her, reimburse her transportation and her pension.

as a *glacis*, the first line of defense, for England. The end of 1897 brought some relief to the fear of the English, which is why in 1906 La Queux published a second novel even more horrible in order to bring the English back into the French camp. William Le Queux, of French father but born in London, was an agent of the French Intelligence Services who had been given the mission to play the role of briard unifying.

An unpaid employee is neither more nor less than a slave!
A clue actually suggests that life was not rosy every day
for the two orphans: Emilie ran away several times⁶.

One day, even, two years after being exiled to Canada, Emilie took refuge with the neighbors, a farm called *Farm Rex*, where the undernourished girl was finally able to satisfy herself as she pleased. As is often the case in the countryside over quarrels over poultry or cattle, the widow Mary Rex (of English origin) was the worst enemy of the Stewarts (of Scottish origin) and the reception and the home that the Rex offered to their servant did not improve their relations with the Stewarts.

Marie Rex had several grown children who worked on the farm. As the Stewarts expected, Emilie did not fail to complain to the Rex about the Stewarts' mistreatment of her. She told anyone who listened that the Stewarts had even one day sent her on foot *in a Siberian cold* to the village of Elkhorn, implying that they hoped to see her die frozen.

Furious to hear all these scabrous rumors spreading that revealed to the whole country the family's terrible nature, the Stewarts filled with rage thought they could only regain their honor before the Courts of Justice. They sued

⁶ •Petition to Set Aside Letters of Guardianship, Archives of Manitoba, ATG 0064A, GR 5338, Guardianship file regarding Emily Hilda Blake [A.P. Stewart to Have Rex Guardianship Set Aside], No. 108, G 7068.

•Mary Rex Letter, Archives of Manitoba, ATG 0064A, GR 5338, Guardianship file regarding Emily Hilda Blake [A.P. Stewart to Have Rex Guardianship Set Aside], No. 108, G 7068.

•Guardianship Order, Archives of Manitoba, ATG 0064A, GR 5338, Guardianship file regarding Emily Hilda Blake [A.P. Stewart to Have Rex Guardianship Set Aside], No. 108, G 7068.

•Affidavit of G. R. Coldeery, Archives of Manitoba, ATG 0064A, GR 5338, Guardianship file regarding Emily Hilda Blake [A.P. Stewart to Have Rex Guardianship Set Aside], No. 108, G 7068.

the widow Rex for kidnapping. While awaiting trial, Mary Rex had a rather brackish foretaste of what would happen to her if justice found her guilty: she made a brief preventive stay in a cell of the county. She found that the place lacked the most basic comfort. There's a saying that *if you don't want to show your panties, you should not climb a ladder*. Unfortunately for the Stewarts who had put their problems in the public arena, it was proved that the girl was indeed a martyred child. So, the Rex were acquitted.

As soon as Emilie got out of prison, Marie Rex decided to become the official guardian of the eleven-year-old girl, to the delight of the latter. On April 18th, 1889, Emilie began to officially serve her new employers, Mary Rex's family. But the Stewarts were determined and even stubborn wrestlers. Their relentlessness was fueled not only by their fierce hatred of their neighbors, but also by their desire to restore the image of their honor and dignity, which had been tarnished by the flight of the so-called malnourished girl who had peddled throughout Manitoba the stories of abuse of which she had been the innocent victim. All these abuses were highlighted by the publicity of the trial. Far from holding themselves for beaten, the Stewarts tried by all means to get the girl back home. They knew that Emilie's Achilles heel, which weakened her to the highest degree, was her insatiable need to be loved.

One day, two of Stewart's sons met her in the open countryside, as she watched over a herd of cattle grazing peacefully on the prairie. Emilie was at first very fearful. Then, thanks to an approach full of youthful kindness, the two teenagers managed to speak to her:

—*We miss you very much, they assured her. We hope with all our hearts that you will return to take your empty, too-empty place in our family.*

The call of these two boys who seemed to have such a great interest in her, and perhaps even a little love, touched her to the depths of herself.

Little Emilie, plagued by an immense need to be loved, could not resist the inviting solicitude and charm of the two teenagers. She decided to return to the Stewart's. She therefore drafted an application for *Review Appeal* to the Court of Justice. She disavowed her own previous accusations that the Stewart had abused her:

—*Everything was a web of lies and deceptions inspired by... by... the Rex family!*

She claimed to have been well nourished by the Stewarts, well treated, and well educated, including in the religious field. The only culprits were none other than the Rex who, as Emilie wrote in the same letter, *treated her as the last of their servants*. Thus, Marie Rex lost the girl who returned to work with the Stewarts. But Emilie soon realized that she had been manipulated. The thoughtfulness of the two young boys had quickly faded in the fragile heat of the *Indian Summer*⁷, immediately replaced by the cold winter. She realized that she had been nothing but a pawn, a simple weapon in the hands of these two deleterious and venomous families for their only selfish enjoyment of satisfying in an implacable ethnic hatred, eternal, and cruel vendetta in which the girl had nothing to do.

⁷ St. Martin Summer.

Upset, Emilie fled again, but this time the Rex and the Stewart did not agree to give her asylum. She was only in the tender age of fourteen and found herself in the world, her brother being far, too far away, lost in the Canadian immensities of this vast country as great as the whole of Europe. The Rex and Stewarts had, they believed, succeeded in demonstrating to ordinary mortals that the problem did not come from themselves but from this evil child. Their honor was saved! Emilie did not matter! She was just a broken stick that was thrown away after hitting their enemy. In those cruel and immoral years, a poor child, alone in the world, sold for her work was practically no longer a human person.

Of these tens of thousands of children rejected by England deep in its colonial territories⁸, deprived of love, brutalized, raped, exploited, abused, most suffered a lot, and some became criminals. This was the case with Emilie. Accustomed to lying and concealing her true feelings to protect herself from human wickedness and selfishness, she hooded in an armor of hostility and arrogance that gave her a defense against the horrible marauders who wandered the world in search of wicked falls

But this distrust prevented her, at the same time, from finding friendship and love. Sure, the next family would bring her fraternity and affection. She became an addict to change like a compulsive gambler thirsting for good fortune and chance.



⁸ •The overall number of children deported is estimated at 230,000. The forced deportation of abandoned or orphaned children ceased in 1970.

She thus reached the age of twenty, like an exhausted swimmer who finally touches the other bank of a perilous river. The pitfalls of her life were all those many families she had successively served and then left across Western Canada without finding the slightest comfort for her many wounds. Yet she sought with passion and despair this impossible Love. Eager to get a new look and live on a better foot, Emilie changed her name around the years 1892, like a caterpillar abandoning her coat to become a butterfly. She became *Hilda Clark*, hoping to avoid remaining the target of the harmful rumors that, until then, had followed in her footsteps like evil shadows.

To complete her new metamorphosis, she assumed the title of *nurse*. In the West, in full construction on the ruins of the Métis and indigenous civilizations that European immigrants had dismantled to become masters of the world, anyone could adopt the mask of a doctor, a lawyer, a politician or a spiritual leader, provided they spoke easily and own a good *colt 45* to convince the suspicious parishioners.

It was also rumored, around the same time, that Hilda was behind the suicide (or false suicide) of Robert Singer, the twenty-three-year-old son of Mrs. Stewart, one of the two boys who had manipulated Hilda into believing that their family missed her, and that he probably loved her. This poor boy died in 1894, but the mysterious cause of his death was never elucidated. Hilda also announced all these successive changes of identity and profession to Mrs. Stewart with whom she had maintained an intermittent epistolary link.

Hilda also confided to Mrs. Stewart that, as a nurse, she planned to return to England (the country of her

childhood) to spend time there caring for sick English. Childhood is always idealized, even when it has been unhealthy. Who could have guessed in the solitudes of the vast Canadian Prairies that on the Old Continent, Europeans were sharpening their bayonets to exterminate each other twenty years later and thus precipitate Europe in its decline?

In 1896 Hilda was working at Aikenside⁹. It was in these places that the eleven-month-old baby of his employers, Mary and Robert Crozier, died suddenly while under the care of the young "nurse". His death was not declared until two days later, as due to a simple flu. Doctors at the time possessed about as much medical knowledge as their patients, especially in those remote and frontier regions where practitioners often had fanciful or fake degrees, usually awarded, as mentioned above, by the imagination of their holders alone. And when, shortly after the death, the mother of the baby sank into a nervous breakdown, a new rumor spread that the family had decided to hide Hilda's responsibility for the death. Was it the reality or the fruit of the creative inspiration of a rural gossip? No one knew.

Nothing prevents us from thinking that the beautiful Hilda had nothing to do with all those facts. Following the confusion created by the tragic and nebulous disappearance of the baby, Hilda moved to Winnipeg —the former Métis village of La Fourche— and worked in several neighborhoods. Then, in 1898, she found a job at Brandon¹⁰ with Robert Lane, a polite, hard-working, and

⁹ •Today Aikenside is a simple place located 20 km from the NNE of Brandon (Manitoba), Geographical coordinates: 50°0'17" North latitude, and 99°49'14" West longitude.

¹⁰ •The city of Brandon takes its name from Brandon House, one of the old fur posts (named in 1793) of the British Hudson Bay Co., when the Canadian Pacific Railway wanted to establish a station there in 1881. Brandon House had been named in honor of

courageous man. He enjoyed a solid reputation within the city's Methodist milieu, which was bathed in a very traditional Victorian atmosphere.

The small town of Brandon, now made up of at least 50,000 inhabitants, was a municipality that had just acquired *town status* fifteen years earlier. Robert was a caring father and model husband. His excellent reputation was based on his glorious past as a soldier. Twenty-five years earlier, he had bravely fought in the cavalry unit of Charles Boulton¹¹. He was also a very wise businessman and at the same time the treasurer of his Shooting Club. He was truly one of the notables of this small-town west of Winnipeg. The four Lane children often played with their friends in the neighborhood. Hilda, although a little introverted, seemed to be well accustomed to the family atmosphere.

Mary Robinson Lane, Robert's happy and proud wife, was also highly regarded in the social hierarchy of this small provincial town that has now become Manitoba's second largest urban area. Mary came from a very wealthy

Archibald Douglas, 9th Duke of Hamilton (Peerage of Scotland) and 6th Duke of Markon (Peerage of England). Brandon was thus of the Anglo-Protestant family of the Scottish lords of Douglas, among whom the most famous in Manitoba was Lord Selkirk who, under the guise of philanthropy, had participated in the expulsion of the Scots from the Highlands of Scotland and their resettlement in the Red River Colony in order to submerge the French-Métis people. In his view, the Métis people were too recalcitrant about the British Hudson Bay Co, which he owned.

¹¹ ● Charles Arkoll Boulton (1841-1899) was a soldier, famous in Canadian history for having his fifty soldiers captured by Louis Riel's French-Métis in 1869, while Boulton, their leader, fled to *Portage la Prairie* before being also taken prisoner by Riel and then released. In 1885 Boulton took his revenge against the Métis at Batoche, when, with a thousand soldiers, two cannons, and two machine guns, he managed to crush 80 French-Métis... in four days of fighting. Francophone survivors who failed to quit were brutally massacred.

bourgeois family of Binscarth¹². She was even said to come from the English gentry of Great Britain (in the same way as Sir Richard Beauchamp Duff). At the time, this was "the top of the line" because Queen Victoria did not yet enoble crooked financiers or drug-addict singers as is commonly done today.

Of course, no one had gone to verify the validity of these rumors, which Mary herself had discreetly spread. She stayed at home and cared for her four children with great dedication. However, she knew how to fight against the demoralizing idleness of the rich. To this end, she was very active in her Methodist Church, St. Matthews, as well as in the Brandon Local Council of Women, which met regularly, at least once a week. The family was materially very well off. The father, out of necessity, and the mother, out of voluntary complacency, were very busy outside the house. Hilda (20) was hired in 1898 to give some female presence to the four young children: *Evelyn*, one year old, *Mary*, three years old, *Edith*, four years old, and *Thomas*, five years old.



On July 15th, 1898, the beautiful and blonde Hilda with Mediterranean blue eyes, came to take up her ancillary duties in the Lane family. Mary, the mother, was overjoyed. She was going to be able to free herself even more without feeling unnecessarily guilty. Hilda received the usual space of a maid: a bedroom of 2.5 meters by 4 with a small narrow bed in one place, a wardrobe, a chair and a

¹² •Binscarth: a town in Manitoba, landlocked in the Rural Municipality of Russell, and located 167 km northwest of Brandon. The geographical coordinates of Binscarth are 50° 37' 36" North latitude and 101° 16' 58" West length.

sink surmounted by a mirror. This room was at the top of the stairs.

Her first morning gesture was to get up a little earlier than the others in order to rekindle the flame in the big wood-fire cooker that heated the house. Then she prepared breakfast without awakening the family. Her daily job was to do... everything: washing, cooking, childcare, cleaning, lawn and maintenance of the home and house. In the fall and spring, she had to do the big cleanings that included carpets, walls, floors, everything.

Thus Mrs. Lane could indulge in her generous volunteerism for the benefit of five or six poor families and looked after them well. In this way, she could prepare herself for a place of choice in the Methodist Paradise. And as she also played the role of a woman of the ruling class, she received people of her social standing and, in addition to her daily work, Hilda had to cook sophisticated dishes, and serve them during receptions.

On day one, Mrs. Lane explained to Hilda the *lists of chores*; endless lists. There was the *daily* list—which did not leave her a single moment to breathe, from dawn until 10:00 o'clock in the evening—the *weekly* list—for less common cleanings—the *monthly* list, the *semi-annual* list, the *annual* list... and all this for a pitiful salary. It was pure and simple slavery. And this lady felt like a holy woman to whom the angels, cherubs and seraphim would form a Guard of Honour when she entered God's Heaven, declaiming *Hallelujahs!* with their crystal clear voices.

However, the unfortunate Hilda considered herself to be blessed by God et favored by Heaven for this incredible chance to live in this *cathedral* that was really out of the ordinary by its sumptuous modernism and its adjoining

artificial pond¹³. While the vast majority of houses, whether in France, England or anywhere else in Europe, were still lit by oil or kerosene lamps, the Lanes' home already had electric lighting, central heating coal, running water and all that modernism could produce for the benefit of privileged Canadians.

How difficult it is to imagine the pleasure and astonishment of those who could plunge their homes into a bright light in a split second by turning a small faience switch between their thumb and index fingers. Until then they had to be content with the shadow puppets poured out by a candle or whale oil lamp whose wick smoked while sizzling! The children literally spent their evenings turning the light on and off. Fortunately, electric bulbs were not yet limited to a thousand ignitions by *planned obsolescence*¹⁴. The arrival of *television* after the Second World War was only a pale reflection of this ineffable happiness. It was only matched by the arrival of the *Internet*, a century later.



We can easily imagine the wonder and... the feeling of envy felt by Hilda Blake who had just taken back her real name. It was in her heart, an active and not submissive jealousy that developed. How could an infinitely righteous God have created such an unjust world? It was, in a new light, the eternal and insoluble existential problem: the rich

¹³ ● It seems that this area was in the current area of the Police Station and the Real Canadian Superstore.

¹⁴ ● Obsolescence was programmed by the Phoebus Cartel of the manufacturers of electric bulbs of the time: General Electric for the United States, La Compagnie des Lampes for France, Philips for the Netherlands, Osram for Germany, Tungsgram for Hungary, and the Associated Electrical Industries for England.

carefully ignore this paradox that fills the hearts of the poor with repressed hatred and revolt.

Hilda knew very well that in England, not only would she never enjoy all this comfort, but she would have to share a tiny, damp, shady, dark room with two or three other maids, imported from underdeveloped Ireland and Scotland. She would be exploited and worn out to the bone by the Victorian *nouveaux-riches* born from the Industrial Revolution. She would be despised and forced to use the service staircase to get in or out, eat a frugal meal in the kitchen, avoid any familiarity with the family of her employers. One would even claim from her, yes, that she be accommodating with the sons of the family in the grip of the first emotions, all knowing that the slightest pregnancy would mean immediate dismissal.

At first everything was fine. Hilda knew the secret of making everyone love her. She loved the four children, and they made her feel good. She quickly became an accomplished and indispensable servant, even a substitute mother. But deep in her heart, she knew that she wasn't just anyone. Or so she believed! Between her common name and her surname, she liked to wear a parade "*Beauchamp*", an aristocratic panache that the horses of the Middle Ages displayed on their shield and armor. She had been told, one day, that Hugues de Beauchamp¹⁵, companion of William the Conqueror, who came from France when William had invaded England in 1066, was without doubt her

¹⁵ •Like Montgomery, Lacy, Montaigu, Percy, Malet, Tirel, Vernon, Talbot, Venables, Carteret, Mortemer, St-Clair [Sainte-Claire], Colleville [Colvill], Durville, Fils-Osbern [and all Fitzgeralds or others], Beaumont, Montfort, Rhuddlan,... and a thousand others, including d'Urberville, the name of Tess by Roman Polanski, herself proud of her Franco-Norman origins, which is a corruption of Seri d'Auberville, companion of William the Conqueror. In fact, the French family of Beauchamp moved to England at least two centuries later, as part of the French colonization of the island of Great Britain.

ancestor. And she knew that the oldest and most conceited English nobility was the one that could find its roots in the lower abdomen of those distant French invaders of the eleventh century.

At the same time as running Workhouses to exploit poor abandoned children, the Beauchamp's were large landowners in England for whom Hilda's mother had worked in her teenage. *The beautiful Hilda was most presumably the adulterous daughter of this aristocratic family?* God knows! Hilda wanted to believe it with all her strength. The possibility of being the uterine child of a Baron of William the Conqueror—who was himself a bastard—seemed to feed her fantasies, if not *to be someone*, at least *to exist*.

This dream was one more reason to secretly hate her current mistress who had received everything from life without having deserved it: a handsome husband, beautiful children, comfort, ease, spending her life fighting her faults in order to deserve and earn Paradise while the hard work was done by someone else, happy to spend her days earning the esteem of others by working voluntarily. While she, *Hilda de Beauchamp* Blake, felt despised even if she was working as a convict. She had suffered so much from the lack of love and indifference of all.

It is always dangerous to compare ourselves and envy the wealthiest, those whom life has pampered too much, all those who were born with a silver spoon between their lips, to whom unjust Life has offered on a silver platter the fruit of the work of a whole family, of a multitude of servants, of a whole dynasty, without having deserved it in the slightest, and who entitled themselves to despise and scorn the less privileged. Popular wisdom would be to

compare oneself only to the poorest. It is the secret of happiness. But Hilda didn't know it and couldn't.

And jealousy began to consume the girl's heart to the point of losing her mind. She plunged even more into the illusions of her great Franco-Norman baronial name of *Beauchamp*. She, who had such a grandiose origin could certainly not have fallen to the modest role of a maid, with the only honorability, sole pride, of her secret Virtue of flesh and blood... unexplored and disdained until then by the slightest gallant! Her delightful fantasies of grandeur were nourished by her unbridled taste for reading. She literally devoured *rosewater* novels *à la Delly*". She was so prone to immerse herself in an illusory world where she could identify with a medieval princess fallen by human wickedness, with an unfortunate victim, afflicted by life.

Thus, she had read, savored, and reread many times with delight *Tess d'Urberville* by Thomas Hardy, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë; abused and unhappy young girls, like her, who had had to struggle hard to build herself. In *Oliver Twist*, she was Nancy. She fulfilled herself in all the roles of persecuted. And she decided to bear the name she should always have had: Emily Hilda Beauchamp Blake. Henceforth she will bear this name as a restorative aristocratic panache, as a golden shield of medieval chivalry that linked her to the glorious past of Sir Richard Beauchamp Duff.



Emily had been working for the Lanes for two years when, on a certain day in May, Mrs. Lane left to visit her parents in *Birtle*, 140 km to the northwest, by muddy paths barely drawn in the vast Canadian Prairie. Hilda found

herself at the head of the household. She played with delight the role of the absent mother and even that of the wife who takes great care of her husband; with the most honorable intentions, of course; at least at the beginning. For, it seems clear that Robert Lane ended up sinking into the beautiful Mediterranean-blue eyes of the blonde Hilda.

But all happiness has an end, and the delicious illusion of elevations of her social status was suddenly shattered by the abrupt return of the mistress of the house... the intruder. Hilda then began to feel confusedly that the only obstacle to her own happiness was Mary. It seems obvious that Robert Lane's behavior led her to think so, by suggesting to her that "*if he had not been married...*", the usual phrase of unscrupulous seducers who seek to get more and more from their prey and who wish to delight from the lives of the humble. It was like savoring a sweet mandarin before throwing away the skin.

Clearly, she became convinced that she was able to make herself loved by Robert Lane. She was capable of charming Robert to the point of making him madly in love with her. She had realized that he adored her body to the point of sinking into comatose orgasms. The Victorian era erected the frigidity of wives into an absolute Virtue. It was even more singular that Queen Victoria herself reserved frequent attentions for the Voluptuousness Goddess. And after the Great Departure of her dear husband for the uncertain Afterlife, she could not help but take a substitute for satiating her demanding libido in the rich positions of the Kamasutra. Abdul Karim would not have said otherwise.

As for the Victorian husbands, they could console their frustrated sensuality and their Methodist soul with maids. It seemed less serious, less sinful than find consolation with courtesans of inferior social status. Mortal sin became venial, very venial. God seemed to have created the all-purpose maid¹⁶ for the only pleasure of the wealthy. Some bourgeois and aristocrats really believed it!

Yes! Hilda felt able to make herself loved by Robert Lane and to pull out of the *Game of Life* as had done Jane Eyre, Tess d'Urbervilles and Nancy (Oliver Twist)! In the meantime, *THE BRANDON SUN* newspaper announced that the wife of a previous Hilda employer had just died of pneumonia at the age of 37. Hilda showed some annoyance for a brief while. One could therefore die very young and go through life like a shadow, like a solitary cloud, without leaving the slightest trace, the slightest child to shed a small tear of sorrow, of regret, to caress with his hand the warm chinouk of the Prairies as a sign of good-bye!

It seems that it was from this moment that the idea began to germinate in her desperate mind that she could perhaps take her Destiny in her own hands and act for her happiness, her future, her own resurrection. Time was pressing! She was entitled to happiness, too, what the heck! And she began to accumulate in her room vials of *laudanum*, a mixture of alcohol and opium sold by pharmacists throughout the British Empire. It was a powerful analgesic that exalted melancholic spirits, put a smile back on neurasthenics and tranquilized hypochondriacs... The

¹⁶ La *bonne-à-tout-faire* as the French say.

only problem was that it made those who abused it totally addicted, because it was an extremely addictive drug.

Opium¹⁷ was produced on a large scale in the English colony of Bengal by the *British East India Co.* This company played the international role of the *Medellin Cartel* today. But, while the famous Cartel must fight against the Colombian army and that of the United States, the British East India Co. had the British guns of the Royal Navy to impose its drug on China¹⁸. Hilda knew the devastating effects of the opium consumed in high doses. Therefore, she accumulated the laudanums vials with a view to use it later and, if possible, in the near future.

Despite her project, which she kept very present in the background of her memory, Hilda continued to faithfully serve her mistress. Yet the project remained alive and well despite some changes in the way of getting rid of her rival. She took advantage of a family outing to Winnipeg, on a beautiful afternoon of June (more precisely, June 20th), to discreetly buy a 22-gauge pistol and a box of polished copper bullets¹⁹. She hid the whole thing in her room. A few days later, Robert Lane was injured in a horse-drawn carriage accident. He had to stay in bed for a few short days. She took good care of him.

¹⁷ ● From where are today extracted *heroin* and *morphine*.

¹⁸ ● *The British East India Co.* imported millions of tons of tea from China, but the Chinese disdained English products. So, the British company forced China to buy its opium to balance England's trade balance. To this end, the Royal Navy made two wars against China: the so-called Opium Wars, in 1840 and then in 1860. Only the communist regime of Mao Zedong managed to eradicate drug addiction by liquidating drug addicts, a century later. It was also this same company that was at the origin of the American Revolution by forcing Americans to buy its overtaxed tea to pay for the debt of the Seven Year War.

¹⁹ ● The .22 caliber is equivalent to 5.6^{mm}.



Finally, on July 5th, a reception marking the beginning of the summer season was planned for the Lane children and their friends. Around 4:00 p.m. that day, in splendid weather, the temperature of 21° was ideal. The children were seated on the well-mowed soft green lawn. Hilda was doing the service. Mr. Lane, finally recovered from his accident, had gone to work, and Mrs., who had no social meeting, was laboriously busy replacing the heavy winter curtains with light drapes, more adapted to the great summer heat of this continental climate.

Suddenly, Mrs. Lane, pregnant again, came to order Hilda to go and prepare a sweet little dessert for the children who were feasting. Their exuberant squinting and playful laughter could be clearly heard from the lawn. Did she ask her in a tone that displeased the maid? No one ever knew. In a few seconds the situation of this family and that of Hilda would be completely upset.

—*Now is the time!* thought Hilda as she ironed the linens after checking that the children's table lacked nothing.

Instead of obediently complying with her mistress' request, Hilda walked to her bedroom, took the gun, supplied its barrel with several sparkling cartridges, pulled back the steel hammer so that the handgun was completely ready, and then slipped it into the central pocket of the small white apron of a hard-working servant. After which, she calmly went to the room where Madam was working. With a perfectly impassive face, Hilda introduced herself

before her boss who had just come down from the stepladder. She approached Mary, very surprised by this strange behavior, inappropriate enough for an *all-purpose maid* in a family that considered itself eminently distinguished. Arriving in front of her mistress, Hilda embraced her without a word, presumably to wish her *a Bon Voyage into Eternity*, or, as several historians imagined, to express her deepest regrets: "*I am very sorry, Mary. My gesture is not personal against you. I like you, but it's the only way for me to extricate myself from my desperate situation as an orphan and maid. I must marry your husband. He showed me that he loves me, and I love him too. For him as for me, you are an unfortunate interference to our Happiness. Sorry!*"

Mary stared at her in amazement, trying to guess what this curious attitude, this unusual affection meant, and it was then that Hilda calmly brandished the gun, pointed at her mistress' face and shot at point-blank range. Despite this proximity and by incredible luck, the projectile missed her. Mary then turned around and fled in terror down the stairs, but the killer chased her and fired a second bullet that hit her in the back, pierced a lung, and lodged just above the heart. The two detonations were heard by the children who were outside. A few moments later, these same young people, who were playfully snacking, saw their mother appear, panting. She fell on the sidewalk bordering the house.

To the incisive cries of the children, the neighbors rushed to the scene of the crime and found that Mary was bleeding profusely from a life wound in the back. Help

was sent to be sought. As everyone examined and tried to console the dying woman, Hilda Blake staggered out of the house. She stammered a stunning story:

—I was hanging curtains in the room with Madam, when a vagabond came knocking on the door of the house, on the street frontage, to beg for something to eat. I heard Mrs. Lane order him to leave. Then a shot broke out. I saw Madam collapse and the individual fleeing through the side alley in the direction of the CPR Railway Station²⁰!

The description already lacked plausibility because the two women were upstairs, and the vagabond had necessarily knocked on the door on the ground floor. Normally, it would have been more logical for the maid to come down to answer. Assuming that it was Madam who went to open the door, Hilda could not have seen her collapse, but, on the other hand, rushing to the window, she might have been able to spot the assassin fleeing down the side alley toward the train triage yard.

The police quickly arrived at the scene of the crime and went after the alleged murderer after the maid had given a precise report: "thirty years, about 1.75 m, dressed in a work gown, a black coat and a black hat with wide brims. He spoke poor English and was carrying a backpack." Without a doubt troubled and distressed by the events, the two oldest Lane children, Wilson and Barton, seemed to confirm that they had seen the man walk away. Their mother was mortally wounded and already in a coma, while her blood formed a large vermilion red puddle

²⁰ •CPR = Canadian Pacific Railways, now CP Rail.

under her. She was of course unable to confirm the aggression and the description of the murderer.

Mary Robinson Lane died on the sidewalk within minutes²¹. The police rushed to the marshalling yard. A Canadian Pacific Railway employee claimed that he had indeed seen a vagabond who had approximately the reported characteristics. He had jumped off a freight train earlier and then entered the 10th Street. He had even walked up the street of the Lane family to beyond their house. Thirty minutes later, the vagabond was flushed out from a grain silo, arrested, and locked up.

As news of Mrs. Lane's death spread throughout the city, anguishing cries of "*Lynch him! Lynch him!*" began to be heard here and there. The arrest of the vagabond protected him against the furious mob, drunk with revenge and eager to wash away the crime as quickly as possible by a crime or any other punishment whatever it was. He was a French-Métis named Pierre Germain²². He was coming from *Stuartburn*, a small village now absorbed by the gigantic agglomeration of Winnipeg, as greedy as the Hydra of Lerne to swallow the surrounding villages as soon as they got too close to the Metropolis of the West²³.

The insurrection of the French-Métis of the West was still recent (1885), and all those white settlers who had come to steal the land from the natives and from the Métis, did not forgive them to have the audacity to resist the colonization by such a prodigious civilization. Heritage

²¹ Vital Statistics 1899 death record for Mary Robinson Lane, Archives of Manitoba, CSC 0034A, GR 4539, Z-01-05-03-03, c. 1899.

²² •Some journalists wrote Peter German.

²³ •It was then the great Metropolis of the West, the Gateway to the Prairies. Today, the torch is in Calgary who has just stolen it from Edmonton.

thieves do not like to see their wandering victims, who have become wretched beggars. This makes them feel *guilty twice*. They feel selfish and abject, so they try to vilify their victims and charge them with their own moral defects.

The Lane children, too influenceable, thought they recognized the vagabond but could not specify whether they had seen him at the time of the crime or before, because the appearance of the Métis was quite common especially since, to the uninitiated, people of the same race seem as similar as two drops of water. The young children were playing in the small park and playfully snacking. They didn't pay attention to the street which was, in fact, only a very powdery dirt road²⁴. Pierre Germain admit he begged in many houses, but could not determine if he had come to that specific property. Several other vagrants were brought to the station.

Hilda, for her part, was unable to recognize any of them as the murderer; and for good reason! Fortunately for Pierre Germain, deep down, Hilda was fundamentally honest, because she could have hanged anyone in her place.

In the hope that the murderer would have thrown his gun in the immediate vicinity of the crime site, Police Chief Jerome Kirkcaldy had most of the investigation carried out in the vicinity of the crime scene. Seeing police officers scouring the property, Hilda walked out of the building and asked them if they had checked under a pile

²⁴ • This street, called Victoria Street (of course), will soon become a stretch of the famous Trans-Canada Highway, nearly 8,000 km long, from coast to coast. Until the Federal Government created a diversion from the north of the city. This Victoria Street is now the Trans-Canada Highway-Bis (1-A).

of lime barrels lined up against the fence. And when the investigators began to carry out their research there, Hilda joined them, raised an empty stove, and... miracle... a box of bullets and a .22 *long rifle* revolver wrapped in newspaper were there.

It was like a gift from Heaven. A policeman, Detective John Foster, noted that according to Hilda's description, the trajectory of the projectile should have been *ascending* and in the chest, in the event that the murderers have fired from the outside below, or *ascending* and behind her back if the victim had turned to flee; the shooting being from outside and the victim upstairs. But we had to face the facts: this famous trajectory was *descending* and, *in the back*, and did not correspond to any scenario described by Hilda. This was what the autopsy showed.

In addition, the shot was fired at *close range* and not 8 or 10 meters away (from the street), because the burnt powder had ignited the victim's dress. The first shot (missed) had reached the ceiling in a trajectory that could no longer come from the street. Faced with these singular untruths, the policeman began to suspect Hilda Blake. The investigation was becoming more precise. Re-interrogated, Hilda repeated her story of a beggar.

The policeman was aware that, here too, since the North-West Insurrection, the French-Métis played in the Western Plains the role of scapegoats that the Black people held with perseverance and resignation in the United States, for the benefit of white criminals who wanted to launch investigators on false tracks. To explain her long delay in leaving the house following the shouting, Hilda added that when Mrs. Lane was injured and rushed

outside, she, Hilda, tried to follow her to help her but she tripped down in the hallway and knocked herself out.

When the housemaid had finally been able to get out, the neighbors had arrived, which presupposed that a fairly long period of time had passed. And, most importantly, what eccentric assassin would have had the singular idea of wrapping his weapon and ammunition before getting rid of it, if not a servant obsessed with order and cleanliness? So, after Hilda's proper interrogation, Officer Foster searched her bedroom. There he found the vials of *laudanum* and a brooch wrapped in a piece of newspaper. The paper came from the same newspaper that had wrapped the gun and cartridges. Convinced of Hilda's responsibility for Mrs. Lane's death, the investigator freed Pierre Germain and firmly suggested that he momentarily should go begging for his bread in another area of the Prairie if he didn't want to be hanged up by some Albion knight.

Hilda Blake was arrested on Sunday, July 9th, and incarcerated in the police station's cell for a careful questioning. As a result, the *sandcastle* of her denial could not hope to resist for long the persistent waves of police questioning. After a few minutes of resistance, she gave in and admitted to having perpetrated the crime without confessing any motivation. She didn't want to sully her honor and that of *another person*. She first stated that her relationship with Mary Lane had been excellent since Madam's return from her trip, and even since her own arrival in this family. She revealed that, for her part, she had planned to commit suicide—without explaining why—and that for that purpose she had gone to Winnipeg to buy a .22 *long rifle* pistol on June 20th, 1899, at Hingston-Smith Arms Co. at 486-488 Main Street.

But back in Brandon Hilda Blake hadn't had the *fortitude* (or the *cowardice*, depending on the point of view) to end her life. She had bought drugs, laudanum, but could not bring herself to absorb these devil's substances in sufficient quantities to escape from this life of misery. Anxious to cover up a family scandal that would not fail to smear *a person who was dear to her*, the young woman modified reality to invent a logical motive for her gesture, an explanation that saved honor and appearance.

On Wednesday, she said, a vagabond had passed by to solicit work and, at the same time (in case work did not exist) to beg for at least a piece of bread. Mrs. Lane had abruptly chased him away, denying him any help, probably because this vagabond was not one of the poor people assigned to her. Moved by her own miserable background, Hilda had put herself in the place of the vagabond. She had felt in herself a great exasperation against Mrs. Lane. So, she went to get the revolver from her room where she kept it hidden, went downstairs near Madame, kissed her on the cheek and shot her in the back. Mrs. Lane had turned around with a single momentum, hit her brutally and sent her to the floor, and a sharp elbow had unintentionally provoked the second shot to go off. The second bullet got lost in the ceiling. Mrs. Lane then walked through the front door.

The scenario was cleverly disguised to temper at least her guilt and allow her obtaining of *mitigating circumstances* factors that would save her from the death penalty. For, despite her ardent desire to end her life, the young lady did not want to be helped to die. She wanted to die her own way. In her desperate mind, the plot allowed *another person* to remain in the protective shadow of anonymity: the one for whom she wanted to die, for want of

being able to live in his company. So, Hilda had confessed very quickly to her crime, but, to save her head, she had added an important detail: her gesture was *not premeditated*. In fact, it was likely!

Of course, the gun had been bought much sooner, but it was her –and her alone– that she wanted to destroy by desperation. On Monday, July 10th, the *Preliminary Inquiry*, known as *Coroner's Inquest*, began before Judge Campbell, who quickly came to the intimate conviction that Emilie-Hilda's case should continue in the Court of Assizes.



The trial was scheduled for November 14th, 1899, at the Brandon Courthouse on Victoria Avenue. In the meantime, Hilda was incarcerated in the women's ward of Brandon Provincial Jail²⁵. She fell into an even deeper suicidal depression, no doubt seeing that, despite her crime, her Love would remain a complete failure. She first refused all food, then, gradually, regained her taste for life and began to write the story of her unfortunate existence as a victim, a real ordeal. The jailer Nicot and his wife liked her, and she showed them great gratitude. On the other hand, she remained extremely resistant to the incitement to repentance given to her by protestant chaplain C.C. McLaurin during his frequent comminatory visits.

As for her own defense, she stubbornly refused any lawyer, even the *ex officio lawyers* appointed free of charge by the Judiciaries. When she appeared before the

²⁵ • That was also in the block of Victoria–Park–Lorne and Franklin streets. An address that corresponds today to 525 East, Victoria Avenue, Brandon, Manitoba, location of *Rideau Park Personal Care Home*.

Court of Assizes and heard the name of the judge —named Killam²⁶— she must have shuddered, but this did not prevent her from dismissing any defender. In desperation, the judge adjourned the session and sent the defendant to a nearby room with an attorney, Me. Coldwell. The latter tried, by all the virtues of his own eloquence, to persuade her to accept a professional defender for her. Wasted time!

Even after a long interview and sustained efforts on the part of the Counsel, she remained inflexible. Obviously, she wanted to slip away from this life which had only offered her setbacks, to get rid of this body on the spot as one throws a rag, to take refuge in the soothing arms of Death. It was an "*assisted suicide*" before its time. When the Registrar told her:

—*Emilie Hilda Blake, you are charged with the murder of Mary Lane. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?*

—*Guilty!* she replied without the slightest hesitation.

He asked her if she had anything to add:

—*Yes, I am guilty and I demand the heaviest possible punishment,*" she replied coldly in an icy silence.

Everyone was stunned. Dame Justice wanted to kill people but refused to help them commit suicide in a sham of *euthanasia*, even if this term did not yet exist. It was immoral! Dilemma! Great care must be taken before convicting a person on *simple confession*. The Prosecutor must more than ever refine his evidence in order to avoid a subsequent confession. This can also happen frequently

²⁶ •Killam can be pronounced as *kill'em* = *kill him!* or *kill them!* Chief Justice Killam's Notebook, front cover. Archives of Manitoba, J 0296, GR2219, Winnipeg Court of Queen's Bench judges' notebooks, G 2626.

in the hope of a release promised by some unscrupulous investigators²⁷.

As for Emilie-Hilda Blake, the magistrates took it at ease: the Prosecutor Patterson discussed the problem at length with Judge Killam. They determined the sentencing outright without the attorney appointed for the Defense — a talkative but strategically unfit third-rate lawyer — did not object in the slightest. They paid little attention to the Code of Criminal Procedure, which they should have respected in order to achieve a satisfactory and impartial judgment. The trial continued without a hitch, without any real fight on the part of the indifferent attorney who contemplated the trial as if he were not one of its essential components. The purchase of the pistol a fortnight earlier finally prompted the jurors to give a verdict of *guilt* and especially *premeditation*.

On the basis that, on November 17th, 1899, Emilie-Hilda had pleaded guilty, the judge Killam, the Prosecutor Patterson and the 12 individuals who hid under the mask of jurors found Emily-Hilda totally guilty so that she would be hanged by the neck until death. Brutal crime of the Canadian Justice which was not at its first attempt in the West: 14 years earlier Louis Riel had himself been sentenced to death for political reasons and under the stupid charge of *treason*. This was particularly absurd since the Métis leader had fought for his people who had elected him as its President, and therefore in favor of Democracy. He had not betrayed anyone, no more so than, in our modern times, Nelson Mandela, who suffered 35 years in

²⁷ • "If you confess to this crime, you will go home tonight!" The investigator's trap seems obvious, but it works very well with some people tired of a long and difficult questioning.

prison for similar reasons of pseudo treason²⁸. In both cases, the judges had literally trampled on Justice and Human Rights.

So, the next day, Hilda received with serenity the commitment of the judge... Killam.

—For the murder of Mrs. Mary Lane, Emily Hilda Blake, you will be hanged by the neck on December 27th, 1899, until you are dead. May God have mercy on you²⁹.

Emilie-Hilda listened to the sentence calmly. The problem of *the Clemency* of the Federal Government arose immediately. Why did Emilie-Hilda Blake do everything she could to be executed? What were her motives?

Most of those who looked into this riddle concluded that she did indeed wish to commit suicide. She had simply entrusted the Crown with the task of carrying out her own suicide. However, as stated above, yes, Queen Victoria wanted to wipe her off the face of the globe, but not to satisfy her suicidal need to disappear from this land of sufferings. This poor child, never loved, was full of tears that she had always retained out of pride. In her Brandon prison, her sobs finally began to flood her blue eyes with a multitude of poet's pearls, in *alexandrines*. Her suffering thus metamorphosed into a work of art as only poets know how to do. She composed poems that alluded, metaphorically, to a demonic being who had precipitated her downfall. Her lyrical breath can be represented by the poem that follows:

²⁸ • Riel had been hanged in 1885.

²⁹ Chief Justice Killam's Notebook, Sentencing of Emily Hilda Blake, Archives of Manitoba, J 0296, GR2219, Winnipeg Court of Queen's Bench judges' notebooks, G 2626.

Crimes and Punishments of Canadian Women

Once I was innocent, lighthearted and gay,
And sang while I worked through all the long day ;
A stranger to sorrow, not a care had I,
A laugh on my lip, but never a sigh.

But one day the devil, in the form of a man,
Came smiling towards me, said he: "You can
Know more, if you'll take them,
Of Joy and pleasures," I heard him, say,
Than e'er you have dreamed of, I'll show you the way."

I followed the tempter, along the smooth track,
I'd gone a long distance 'fore e'er I looked back,
Or thought of returning—
When I turned, the way back seemed so lonely and dreary,
E'er I'd gone many steps I grew footsore and weary,
That down by the roadside, to rest and to weep,
My strength was exhausted, I soon fell asleep.

I awakened refreshed, my exhaustion all gone,
Saw the phantom of Pleasure, still beckoning me on;
Then I made up my mind
To leave Prudence behind,
And pursue my perilous way.

As I journeyed along, my heart lost its song,
For the path grew stony and dark.
Each step that I took tore the flesh off my feet,
And the track was a blood-stained mark.

I looked at the tempter, in his eye was a gleam.
I say he was standing beside a dark stream.
He cried, "Come along, take a few steps more
And your struggle is ended, your journey is o'er."

As I stood on the brink of that river,
My heart grew faint and sick.
What I saw only made me shiver—
I thought Fortune had played me a trick.

As I look across I see only the dead,

Pick the roses of life before it's too late

Neither joy nor pleasure," to Satan, I said:
"But pleasures there are, though hidden from view,
They only wait to be claimed by you."

I thought as he spoke, he moved his hand
And I saw I was standing on sinking sand.
As I leaped across, a frantic yell
Reached my ear
When too late, I saw I had leaped into hell.
I tried to go back, but an awful wall
Loomed up, and separated me from all
My youth and innocence.

Forsaken by friendship, kith, and kin
I lie in my lonely cell.
It seems but a dream that I've crossed that dark stream
And descended from heaven to hell.

You hypocrites, pleading religion,
You, inquisitive seekers of fame,
Ready now with your good advice
When I've drunk of the sorrow and shame.
You gave me no timely warning³⁰ ...
.....

Every day, in her narrow and dirty cell, tapped with remorse and guilt, tortured with repentance, that pernicious repentance that devoured the hearts of women when they let themselves go to revel in the voluptuousness of the one they loved, without succeeding in capturing her soul for life. Every day, therefore, she composed, sang or proclaimed by her own lyricism, her intense suffering in the face of injustice.

³⁰ •My Fall. From *Walk Towards the Gallows*, as published in *Brandon Western Sun*, December 14, 1899. From "My Downfall" by Hilda Blake. *Walk Towards the Gallows: The Tragedy of Hilda Blake, Hanged 1899*, Tom Mitchell, Reinhold Kramer - Google Livres

Her behavior eventually attracted the attention of the local *Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club* and of its sister branch *The Women's Temperance League*. Dr. Amelia Yeomans (Medical Doctor) was the president³¹. Yeomans, a “feminist” activist saw in Hilda the perfect example of the victimization of women by men. Rightly so! But, in the end, very inconvenienced to hear Hilda sink into infinite repentance, proclaiming openly and sincerely that she was the murderer, and refusing to deny her crime or to charge Robert Lane, her cowardly predator and lover, Amelia



The executive members of the *Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club*. Sitting on the right: Dr. Amelia Yeomans (*née* Amélie Le Sueur from Québec). Sitting on the left: Hilda Blake while she was in prison awaiting her execution. Archives of Manitoba, c.1900

Yeomans —who was presumably the object of threats or

³¹ Dr. Amélie Yeomans, *née* Amélie Le Sueur, born in Québec, was the first female medical doctor in the Canadian West. She died in Calgary in 1913.

Pick the roses of life before it's too late

intimidation from the husband's family and friends—abandoned her to her sad fate.



Towards the end of November 1899, the jailer discovered that a bar, in Emily-Hilda's cell had been sawed through from side to side in two places. Here! Well! Well! Was the nightingale poet trying to fly away?

Had the injured bird changed her mind? Did she want to live, now? Had she seen that, in the end, the most perverse life was better than the cold, wet humus in the cemetery? Did the nightingale sing every night to hide the murmur of the saw?



The former Brandon Jail, now *Rideau Park Personal Care Home*, was the site of the city's four hangings. *Priv. Coll.*

Without disclosing what he had seen, the jailer hid that night in the darkness and heard the saw song. He unexpectedly appeared in her infamous cell, and she

confessed to the jailer that another guard, Mrs. Emma Tripp, had provided her with the hacksaw. Questioned, Emma confessed to her violation of prison regulations, but tended to excuse her professional misconduct on the pretext that Emilie Hilda did not really want to escape but kill time (!) This was surprising, to say the least, on the part of a person who was condemned to die in such a short time. In reality the guard, moved with pity as she saw the inexorable death approaching, had wanted to help the young woman.

Some, not shying away from any plausible hypothesis (to add to the narrative a pinch of libertinism and eroticism), tried to make Emilie-Hilda look like a lesbian who had killed her mistress. Mrs. Lane was unquestionably her mistress; but of a different order. In fact, this legend came from the fact that, in prison, Emilie Hilda tried to seduce a guard, the same Emma Tripp (who seems to have been a lesbian), so that she could help her escape.

In any case, it is not known what the word "seduce" may have meant. Was it with a sexual connotation or an attempt to push the friendship to its extreme limits in order to use the cooperation of the jailer to run away and hit the open road? She actually provided her with a hacksaw. On the other hand, for this professional misconduct, Mrs. Tripp herself passed, on January 25th, 1900, just after Hilda's death, before a *Court of Assizes* which sentenced her to spend two months in prison.



In the last days of 1899 and of her life, Emilie Hilda tried to delay her inexorable death by casting some light on the motives of the murder. In a letter, she implicated a

man who had promised to marry her *if she killed Mrs. Lane!* This was clearly the key to her poems. Admittedly, there is no doubt that Robert Lane had seduced her during the prolonged absence of his wife. But the "*if she killed Mrs. Lane*" could be explained by the usual arguments of depraved seducers who want to get their pleasure without committing to leave their wife: "*What a pity I am married! If I were single, we could have such a good life, you and me, Honey!*"

This was certainly the phrase that drove poor Hilda into this inexpiable crime. Like Jane Eyre, Tess d'Urbervilles and Nancy, she wanted to give her own Destiny a thumbs up. This hypothesis would also explain why Emilie Hilda confessed her crime so easily to the policeman James Kirkaldy, and then ask for an exemplary punishment from him. She asked him to simply kill her on the spot. Of course, the policeman explained to her that this was not possible.

The punishment was rather *in the ropes* of the executioner! In any case, Robert Lane, the cowardly man, was never worried. His social position even spared him from appearing on the witness stand. However, everyone knew the *ins* and *outs* of the case that circulated insidiously in the city in the form of unhealthy rumors! For his crime, his only punishment was limited to these vague tales, unpleasant but bearable.



Not too long ago –in the 1950s– a theatrical group from Brandon organized an annual visit to the cemetery to explain to the public the various events that had brought some tenants into these Marmorean holes. The public

could pose indiscreet questions. Robert Lane's descendants banned these guided tours, objecting that it was a serious and unseemly foray into the history of their family secrets.



The *Official Executor of High Justice and Courts of Canada*, the Englishman John Robert Radcliffe, spent Christmas Day on one of the Canadian Pacific Railway trains to come and apply the Justice Decision to the young woman. On December 26th, he asked for a prison cell in lieu of a hotel room. It was the only safe place for an executioner coming to kill a woman.

Indecision was so great in Governor General³² — who was no doubt waiting for divine proof, a miracle that allowed him to doubt Hilda's guilt and to save her— that he did not sign the rejection of the Royal Grace until the 26th, the day before execution.

It is true that the private life of this Governor-General, whose "Garter" was doubly symbolic, was made to fill him with tolerance towards other lost sinners. The Canadians were talking about *Minto's little Madness*, a certain Lola Powell³³. But in Minto's case, the wife and mistress got along in Wonder, as in the best London society.

³² •Gilbert John Elliot-Murray-Kynynmound, 4th Earl of Minto, Member of the Order of the Garter, Member of the Privy Council of Queen Victoria, Member of the Order of the Star of the Indies, Member of the Order of St Michael and Saint George, Member of the Order of the Indian Empire. He was born in 1845 in London and died in 1914. He was also the Second Governor General of Canada from 1898 to 1904, and the XXIII Governor General and XVI Viceroy of India from 1905 to 1910.

³³ •Minto's Folly was only 22 years old and Minto more than double. Lola was the daughter of William F. Powell, Liberal Member of Parliament for Ontario and Sheriff of Carleton County. The politician hoped that his daughter would serve as a springboard for him.

Eventually, the Royal Order of Refusal of Grace was telegraphed to Brandon. And preparations for execution were immediately set in motion.

In the early morning, a procession of sleighs snaked through the light mist that enveloped the city of Brandon and came to rest in front of the sad prison. Jurors, journalists and two friends invited by Hilda were the only witnesses. She was brought from her cell to the foot of the staircase to the scaffold, which this time had 16 steps.

Several times she delayed her ascent and the hangman Radclive had to call her to order, kindly but firmly, so that she would decide to climb the last degrees of her life. Before the evil hood was lowered on her stoic face, Emilie scrutinized the small assembly of guests as if she was looking for someone. She was probably hoping to see the man who had taken her to this place. Doubtless, a few fragments of her gloomy poem, which she knew so well, crossed her mind and heart. Where was this Demon, who, in the form of a smiling man, had whispered to her one day: *"I'll make you discover happiness and a pleasure of which you have no idea!"* She had followed this Tempter, but this man had been careful not to follow her up to now. She had maybe hoped that this man would come to hold her hand, to help her soar to Eternity, like *Marc Chagall's Man*³⁴.

So, calmly and with great dignity, seeing that this man had been too cowardly to come and wish her Bon Voyage, she stood straight on the hatch and died instantly.

³⁴ ● In his famous painting "Woman in weightlessness."



Emilie-Hilda was buried in the northeastern corner of the prison courtyard. Investigator James Kirkaldy did not disclose the contents of her personal story or the contents of the letter she sent to *a Brandon man* to tell him that *she forgave him* (?) The detective remained mouth sewn ... for the tabloid press did not yet exist to loosen his tongue by offering him a fortune that would extract his secret. A simple sentimental adventure had become an irreparable tragedy for poor Emilie-Hilda Beauchamp Blake who believed she was finally able to master her Destiny by snatching shreds of well-deserved happiness.

As for Robert Lane, a model man, polite, well-behaved, virtuous, Methodist to the core, Emilie-Hilda was for him only a passing fancy, a parenthesis of freedom in the absence of his beloved wife, a simple fleeting and quickly forgotten love. The blue-Mediterranean eyes of the young and beautiful Emilie-Hilda closed definitively on December 27th, 1899, just after 8:30 am, at sunrise of the cold winter sun, in the courtyard of the old prison now disappeared. With her twenty-one springs seasons, she did not see the twentieth century; she was one year and four days short. She was the *first* woman hanged in Manitoba... finally *first* in something! Her last words were of repentance:

—*Do not judge me too harshly! Good bye!*

She died thus and everyone forgot her because the true tomb of the dead is the heart of the living; and if they try to forget a sad or guilt-inducing event, they also forget the actors. May these pages serve as a memorial!

In 1985, when the more-than-century-old *BRANDON SUN* reported on the excavation of the grounds of Brandon's old jail to create the *Rideau Park Personal Care Home*, there was much speculation about the location of three bodies of hanged people; that of *Emilie Hilda Blake*, *William Webb* and *Walter Gordon*, executed over the years in this jail³⁵. After much talk, the bodies were finally left in peace and the facility for the elderly built on top. No one ever took a back on the fate of the other victim, the real victim totally forgotten: Mrs. Lane. Her unfaithful husband remarried quickly "*to help with his children*", and she sank into complete oblivion³⁶. Robert Lane died in 1924.

The English Government recently asked forgiveness from the descendants of these 230,000 orphans, literally sold as slaves throughout the defunct British Empire.

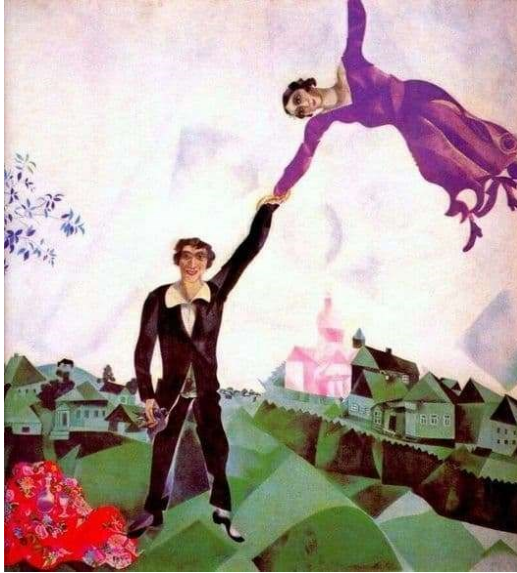


"You hypocrites who plead in the name of God. You who seek Glory. You have not extended a helping hand to me!"

³⁵ ●William Webb, hanged in 1888 and Walter Gordon in 1902.

³⁶ ●Vital Statistics 1900. Marriage record for Robert Lane and Jessie McIlvrde, page 5. Archives of Manitoba, CSC 0036A, GR 3749, Z-06-01-01-01, c. 1900.
●Vital Statistics 1924 death record for Robert Lane, folio 028015. Archives of Manitoba, CSC 0034A, GR 4144, Z-04-01-02-05, c. 1924.

Marc Chagall, Love Walk (Private Collection)



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Never bite off more than you can chew.

The Catherine Snow murder case

The Canadian province of Newfoundland was born in 1949, the year in which, curiously, military service was made universal and compulsory in England¹, unnecessarily since the Second World War had just ended. At the time, it was rumored among the population of the island of Newfoundland that it was against England that Newfoundland opted for independence in 1949, when this island offered itself to Canada as its new bride.

Indeed, the motherland had grossly abused the blood of its colonies during the First World War in order to spare its own. For example, Newfoundland lost all of its young people, sent to Europe during the First World War, and 25% of its male youth during the Second World War. The soldiers of the various colonies of the Empire were thus forced to fight in the front line and die on the European battlefields in order to spare the youth of England².



One hundred and thirty-six years before this island became a Canadian province, in 1813, John William Snow, a Newfoundland fisherman from Bareneed, had

¹ •It will be abolished in 1954. As it is true that the war was over, the English soldiers no longer risked death on the battlefields.

² •This was the main reason why Quebecers refused Conscription, which was not compulsory and general in England, but was practically mandatory in Canada.

settled in Conception Bay. There he had met a beautiful 20-year-old girl named Catherine Mandeville from Harbour Grace, a small village near Conception Bay. Both had settled in Salmon-Cove near Port-de-Grave in a common-law relationship. For the next 15 years, John and Catherine had many children, as in an ancient fairy tales: 7 in all.

In 1828, they decided to marry, perhaps to stabilize their life as a couple who was taking a dangerous course through the pitfalls of existence. As in modern marriages, their children happily attended their parents' wedding. On October 30th, 1828, they got married according to the rite of the Catholic Church.

But few vacillating passions are strengthened and saved by an untimely marriage. The disputes escalated in numbers and violence. The family dishes have become accustomed to being broken by the anger of the lady, accompanied by the swearing of the gentleman. Nothing, and especially not Love, resists the *wear and tear* of time.

Today, most couples end their union through divorce. But at that time, there was no question of it in Newfoundland. Only the rich could afford the divorce which required a special law of the London Parliament for each of the couples in distress. A lawyer was therefore essential and the costs out of reach of the poor. For the stability of couples, the country's politicians, Catholic priests, and Protestant pastors refused to facilitate marital separation, preferring to let the spouses tear each other apart.

In the absence of a divorce, the energetic and beautiful Catherine —the mind greatly disturbed by an overwhelming midlife crisis—, came to the conclusion that she could only solve her marital problem by... a crime.

By the time of this Year of the Lord 1833, she had become the *passionate* mistress of Tobias Mandeville. Her young cousin, barely out of adolescence, displayed harmonious physique appearance, embellished with his bouquet of 25 springs. Troubled by the passion that distorts reality, she put into this assassination a determination and a haste that would cost her what she precisely wished to find: freedom and life.

The infamous laws of the *Test Act* had been repealed in 1829, and Catholics could finally enjoy the same rights as Protestants throughout the British Empire (officially at least). As a result, Catholics could, for example, become owners of a house or a business. However, that Catholic caste in the Empire, so artificially impoverished and totally pauperized for centuries by the British Test Act which had just been abolished, looked with envy and jealousy at the few Catholics who had recently become rich through their business acumen. Wealth thus begat jealousy among persecuted.

For John William Snow, Catherine's husband, that same year, 1833, was to be a red letter day, because, through hard work and deprivation, he had just managed to become the owner of a fishing boat³ and although he did not yet have a slave, too expensive to buy for the moment⁴,

³ •Thanks to the abolition of the Test Act which had just been signed 6 years earlier, in 1829 (called *the Roman Catholic Relief Act*) under George IV of Hanover, remember that until then, the Catholics of the British Empire did not have the right to own a business, an industry or a piece of land. Newfoundland's anti-Catholic regulations had therefore been abolished and John Snow had been able to become the owner of his fishing boat.

⁴ On 26 July 1833, in London, the House of Commons passed an act for *the gradual abolition* of slavery in all British colonies. The emancipation process was scheduled to end on August 1st, 1840. Comfortable compensation for the planters (not for the slaves!!!) was provided for, totaling 20 million pounds; a huge sum. The Canadian historian Marcel Trudel catalogued the existence of about 4,200 slaves in Canada between 1671 and 1834, the year when slavery was abolished in the British Empire. About

he had nevertheless acquired in his service a young "*indentured-servant*", an Irishman named Arthur Springer, barely 28 years old.

These *servants*⁵, without having the status of slave, had the condition. Arthur Springer became practically — according to English law— the full possession of his boss for decades. This was provided for by law so that the owner would reimburse himself for the costs incurred to "import" the worker into the country. The *indentured laborer* could be compared to today's illegal immigrant in developing countries, undocumented, who has to repay his smuggler for many years, *sums that continue to grow under the effect of usurious interest*. In economically delicate or arduous times, it was difficult for an *indentured-servant* to survive. Some English historians consider that only 40% of the "indentured-servants" survived the violence of their master, the grueling work that was required from them, the molestations of depraved scoundrels, and the refusal of their owner to respect the terms of the serfdom contract⁶, before their legal emancipation. Catholic Ireland was an inexhaustible source of indentured-servants.

On the other hand, British laws were so wicked, that in the event that these unfortunate servants did not respect, to the letter, the will and the authority of their odious owner, a hail of legal punishments fell on them, as damning as the Seven Plagues of Egypt. If they fled far from their abusive masters, they were, again, hunted down by the population as fugitive slaves, and the law even

two-thirds of these were Amerindians and one-third were Blacks. (Newfoundland was not yet part of Canada).

⁵ • In English *indentured servant*.

⁶ • For example, by granting them some pocket money.

provided for severe punishment of those who would provide them with any assistance during the escape.

In local newspapers, there were sometimes threatening advertisements that read: "*On the run since last Monday from the house of the subscriber, Joseph Delaney, an apprentice "indentured", approximate height 5' 3"; wears a moleskin jacket and blue pants. Anyone who shelters or employs such apprentice, after this Public Notice, will be prosecuted to the full extent of the Act. Signed John Berri-gan, tailor, City of St. John's, June 6th, 1833.*" In fact, the "indentured servitude" was intended to replace African slavery which had just been banned. Some patriotic pseudo-historians try to deny the existence of such servitude.

Faced with these violations of individual freedom that existed only in favor of the wealthy, the famous Grand Chart —guardian of the Liberties of the English protestant religion⁷— modestly turned the eyes of the other side.



Liberated by the abolition of the Test Act, the family of John William Snow now lived financially very comfortably. As a result, Catherine could be helped by a maid named Kit White. Catherine's handsome and young cousin, Tobias Mandeville, frequently came to the Snow's to pay short visits with a thousand good excuses, but in

⁷ •As stated elsewhere, the civil rights of English Catholics were suppressed by the laws of the Test Act. The Great Charter, moreover, had had the function only of limiting royal power to the exclusive benefit of the great barons and not of the small people. According to several French historians, it was developed in France by exiled English barons. See on this subject Charles d'Eszarly, *La Magna Carta et son origine française*, Comptes Rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 97^e Année, N.1 1953. pp-57-59.

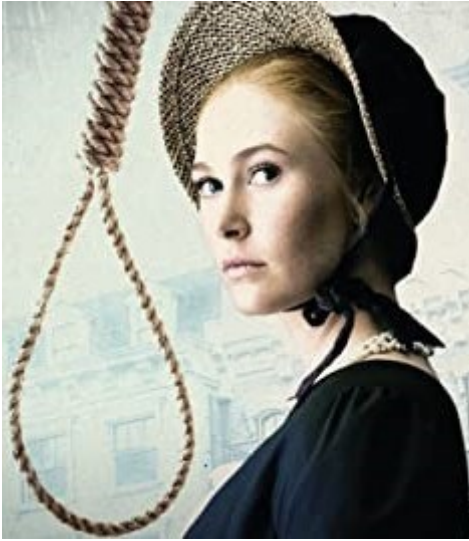
reality, for Catherine's beautiful eyes, which had started to sparkle like a Champagne of the best vintage. Despite her multiple pregnancies, Catherine had retained an attractive appearance that seemed to delight Tobias' senses. Perhaps there was also in the mind of the seductive young man the secret intention to enjoy one day the prosperity of the family, laboriously reaped by the sweat of John William Snow?

From time to time, the young Mandeville would help the reckless owner in his bookkeeping work. As a result, he knew exactly how much the daily profits were as well as the family capital. Catherine, tapped by her deep midlife crisis, found in her young cousin Tobias an attention that her hardworking husband, very busy capturing and negotiating his cod, did not give her anymore, for lack of time and appetite.

Tobias Mandeville descended from a French Huguenot emigrated to Holland and then to England in the eighteenth century. He caused a scandal by criticizing the hypocrisy of London society in Shakespeare's country⁸. A Grand Jury of the... Middlesex had violently condemned his controversial work. But one can imagine that everything eventually degenerated in this family and that the descendants of this virtuous Mandeville family did not show themselves to the moral height of their ancestor. It is true that love corrupts judgment like good wine.

⁸ •His ancestor Bernard Mandeville had published in London a fable in English (The Fable of the Bees, or: Private Vice, Publick Benefits) then in French (La fable des Abeilles (The fable of the bees) or Les Fripons devenus honnêtes gens (The rascals turned honest.) The "bien-pensante aristocracy" (Pharisaical Aristocracy) and Bourgeoisie of the time were frightened to recognize themselves in this description of the Londonian society, and, as a result, made Bernard Mandeville's writings condemned as pernicious and diabolical. Despite his Huguenot origin, Bernard's descendants, Thomas Mandeville, had become Catholic again.

Never bite off more than you can chew.



Representation of Catherine Mandeville, according to a novel of the last Woman hanged in Newfoundland, by Nellie P. Strowbridge. Pri.Coll.

The young Tobias became—at least in appearance—so madly in love with his cousin Catherine that he agreed to discuss the conspiracy to ship the unmanageable John William "in the Best World", in which the two lovers, hand in hand, would soon join him. In the Snows' entourage, Tobias and Catherine were far from being the only ones to wish

the greatest misfortunes to John William as it is true that *wealth is the mother of jealousy, and therefore the grandmother of hatred.*

Hard work produces fortune, which, in turn, brings advantages. Have you noticed to what extent some individuals, hard-working and very thrifty, accumulate sumptuous fortunes, but, chained by sordid greed, find themselves totally incapable of benefiting their wealth? They drag themselves through a miserable existence until their death, at the foot of their "*Gold Calf*" that they dare not chip. Every evening they deprive themselves of the essentials for the pleasure of depositing on top of their fortune the few dollars they have earned through privation. And long before their death, their heirs fight to appropriate their fortune, ready for anything, to the point of having them

declared "mentally irresponsible and incompetent" in order to rush them into a humiliating curatorship.



John's "indentured" apprentice fisherman, the young Arthur Springer, also had good reason to hate his wealthy boss. To begin with, contrary to his contract, the latter only granted him an extremely parsimonious pocket-money that barely allowed him to drink to forget his misery. Moreover, he paid him so late that the young man could hardly afford his alcoholic journeys to the land of forgetfulness. The young Arthur Springer, who was not naïve, realized that the heavier the amount owed by his boss, the more desperate the probability that he would one day get his money back. In other words, he saw that he worked for almost nothing, like one of the unfortunate slaves, stealth shadows he could see in the streets of St. John's or strolling in the gardens of the city. The abolition of slavery did not take place among the English until January 1st, 1833 [ending in 1840], five years after these terrible events⁹.

Arthur Springer knew very well that John was systematically cuckolded by his unfaithful wife, and this did not displease him because he hated his boss so unfair, so ungrateful, so stingy. He even learned by public rumor of the project of assassination that blossomed like a satanic boletus in the mind of the greedy lover and the felonious wife in order to rid them of the cumbersome husband. It was not a curatorship but pure and simple death! And he

⁹ • In France, slavery was abolished by a decree of February 4, 1794 (16 pluviôse year II). Immediately the British invaded the French West Indies to have it restored before this movement contaminated their own slaves. Bonaparte had it reinstated in 1802 "for the sake of public order" to stop the English war. He abolished slavery again in 1814, but this had no effect because of his immediate abdication.

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recklessly joined him when he was promised that the new owners, Tobias and Catherine, would immediately pay him all his arrears, up to the last penny. Yes! Keep dreaming!

Moreover, they undertook to increase his pocket-money, which served as his salary. It was a unique and unexpected opportunity for him to settle his accounts with his boss. But, unfortunately, this project ended up at the end of a rope... In the unlikely probability that the crime would not have been discovered, everything might have ended under the knife of Mandeville who might have wanted to get rid of a troublesome witness.



One morning, on August 31st, 1833, John William Snow boarded his rowboat to fetch from Bareneed the one who was preparing to murder him, Tobias Mandeville. Needless to say he did not know this. He just needed his help. Before leaving, he announced that he would be back in the afternoon. Eager to keep her two teenage daughters away from the place that was to be the crime scene of their father's killing, Mrs. Snow sent them to spend the day and night at *Harbor Grace*, under the careful supervision of the maid Kit White. The servant Arthur Springer stayed at home with Mrs. Snow. As for the five young children, Catherine simply sent them to bed.

The next morning, when the two big girls returned from their far-away "sleep over", Dad "was not back home." They were told that he went fishing and would not be back for some time. But what was not the surprise of the maid Kit White, when, while resuming her morning service, she noticed a man's pants abandoned in the room

of madame... and as she knew very well the laundry of each member of the family, she had to face the facts: "*No! It wasn't Mr. Snow's pants!*" A few hours later, the mysterious trousers had also hit the road to get away. The maid Kit White was careful not to make any reference to it; just *female intuition* that saved her life... No doubt!

At first, everyone believed —or pretended to believe— the official version: *John Snow was fishing on the high seas, and God only knows how many dangers await daredevil fishermen during these offshore expeditions.* However, around the 5th of September, the reckless absence began to worry his fellow fishermen. The police and some volunteers began to search along the shore to see if the ruthless Ocean had returned the remains of one of his victims after devouring the essential: his life.

The search, persevering but unsuccessful, nevertheless generated some rumors. One of them took off and spread with the speed of a grand-duke of America. It insinuated that there was something singular and even strange about this disappearance. It added that John was last seen on August 31st with his apprentice fisherman Tobias Mandeville; and that the "indentured-servant" Arthur Springer was very dissatisfied with the greed of his employer who did not even want to give him his poor allowance which he was legally obliged to grant periodically.

The young man complained bitterly about it. *Here you are! Here you are!* The situation was beginning to bloom with filthy perfidy and infidelity, repugnant as an arum-titan, a foul-smelling flower among all. Most astonishingly, when the investigators pushed the indiscretion to the point of asking some very interesting questions to the wife, she also disappeared like a timid chimera. She

herself had hit the road, like the pants of her lover abandoned at the foot of the marital bed. It was already very curious! And the mystery thickened again when the magistrate Robert Pinsent who had launched the investigation, found traces of dried blood between John Snow's house and his private dock.

Pinsent then questioned the maid, Kit White. She reported the presence of the mysterious man's pants in the wife's own bedroom. Investigators began to wonder if the inconsolable Catherine had really gone off to grieve in the wilderness solitude for her dearly departed husband, or whether she had simply run away for some other reason. The servant Arthur Springer was then summoned by *sub-pœna* to the police station for further questioning. And the boy, skillfully interrogated by the chief investigator, immediately confessed a horror story.

—*Yes! John Snow had been murdered!*

Springer told the stunned investigators that the conspirators had drawn up the execution plan in the following way: "*When John Snow and young Mandeville returned ashore, Mandeville would have to arrange to disembark first on the dock. There, he would head to the family home followed by Snow to whom he would hide the trap.*" In short, he, Springer, was on a mission to end Mr. Snow's life.

—*My role was to wait for them behind the door with John's shotgun, then I appeared on the porch, the gun at the ready. Mandeville who was walking in the lead, had to take a quick step aside to expose Snow, walking behind him, to my rifle fire. Through surprise, Snow would be stunned to see the gun at the last moment. That's when I would shoot him with a single shot!*

This was the scenario of the assassination that the astonished investigators carefully noted on their notebooks. It was a most risky staging for the young Tobias Mandeville who was in high risk of receiving himself his share of buckshot from the killer Arthur Springer. Indeed, it was to be expected that Arthur would strongly stimulate his own failing bravery by means of *adulterated alcohol* sold by the *Hudson's Bay Co.*



At first, everything went as planned. When the boat entered the small bay, Catherine Snow handed her husband's shotgun to Arthur Springer, the killer. The latter seized up and began to descend towards the quay in the direction of Tobias Mandeville, and his boss who was just walking behind Tobias, unaware of the danger. Mandeville finally jumped aside to clear the shooting angle of the rifle. Simultaneously, Arthur Springer shouldered the rifle towards Snow, who was following Mandeville very closely.

It was then that an *unexpected grain of sand* came to block the smooth running of the criminal conspiracy: Springer did not find in himself the courage—or rather the cowardice—to shoot and kill the defenseless man facing him. He realized, to his immense surprise, that he was unable to kill a helpless man, a man who looked at him in amazement. We're never as bad as we think!

After two or three attempts, Springer threw the rifle to the ground as if, bewitched, the weapon burned his fingers. Tobias Mandeville then rushed for the rifle, swearing in anger, picking it up with a single movement, and unloaded it into the chest of John-Arthur Snow who had

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approached, incredulous at the astonishing gestures of this man whom he believed his friend. But the victim's amazement lasted only a split second: John-Arthur Snow collapsed like a block on the vast foreshore; dead.

People say that when the heart stops beating, the brain continues to live for four or five minutes, until the neurons die one after the other, asphyxiated by the lack of oxygen. It is conceivable to imagine that, before he died completely, John-Arthur Snow heard comments from his wife and her lover, who made him understand that if fortune is desirable, it often leads to misfortune. And this precept is not just a mere consolation for poor people to help them accept poverty.

—*Help me to tie him up, damn!* Mandeville shouted to Springer who remained as if prostrate of the assassination.

The two men tied the body securely with marine ropes, of the same caliber as those that would soon hang them from the gallows. They took the body and moved it to the middle of the Bay-of-Conception. There they tied an anchor to the neck of the still warm little husband and let him slide into the deep and mysterious water. The body plunged immediately and was swallowed with a single voracious "*splash!*"

This was Arthur Springer's description of this horrific crime!



Tobias Mandeville was immediately arrested at Bareneed and imprisoned. But he pretended to be indignant at all these accusations, which he claimed were astonishing and even grotesque. In fact, he denied anything that

was not irrefutable and undeniable. Of course, he had nothing to do with this repugnant assassination:

—*It was Springer who fired, and I did absolutely nothing!*
he repeated tirelessly.

Clearly, one of them was lying through his teeth. Unfortunately for the liar, there was in this remote island no experienced attorney capable of giving these repugnant lies an appearance of biblical Truth. How to identify the one who really pulled the trigger? The proofs were already there: DNA and fingerprints; but these sciences were still totally unknown¹⁰. Maybe Springer was just a deceiver and a coward!



The trial of the defendants began on January 10th, 1834, in St. John's of Newfoundland. Despite the full confessions, all pleaded not guilty. George Henry Emerson *improvised* himself as the Defender lawyer of Catherine and Tobias, lovers and evil first cousins. Another good Samaritan, Bryan Robinson, played the role of Defense attorney of Arthur Springer. The Prosecutor explained to the all-male jury that he did not know which of the two defendants had fired the shot, but that both were at the scene at the time of the crime. This was not a good sign for either of them.

As for Catherine Mandeville, several *circumstantial evidences* presented her as implicated and compromised in the murder of her husband. However, the tender-hearted

¹⁰ • Fingerprints were already known in China, but they were not classified as criminal files until 1891. Argentina was the first country in 1892 to identify a criminal by fingerprints. A fingerprint file was created in France in 1901.

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magistrate could not find any concrete and certain evidence of her involvement. Despite all that, everyone understood very well that the wife Snow was undoubtedly the mastermind, the heart of the crime.

Moreover, as we have said, the young woman had cautiously changed her horizon, run away, and it was absolutely necessary to find her. A monster manhunt—or rather *woman-hunt*—was organized in this region. The search raked the whole sector and passed each valley, each flow, each hillside, each grove with a fine-toothed comb. In vain! Trembling like a maple leaf in the autumn wind, Catherine was finally found, a good week later, hidden in the homes of distant friends.



Very generous in the allocation of the death penalty, the Supreme Court of Newfoundland, which opened its judicial session in early January 1834, charged thirteen people with murder. *Thirteen!* No doubt nostalgic for the *Test Act* that had just been abolished, the Newfoundland judges probably wanted to take advantage of this good pretext to clean the village of all its papists. The two main defendants were, of course, Tobias Mandeville and Arthur Springer. As neither man incriminated Catherine Mandeville-Snow—probably out of love for her—she almost made it through this ordeal without the slightest scratch, despite her desperate escape which pointed to her guilt with certainty.

Yet, for the sole purpose of delivering full, just and complete Justice that would hold the wife to account, Judge Boulton composed a sophisticated indictment for the Grand Jury:

"With respect to Catherine Snow, the widow of the deceased victim John Snow, you will have the responsibility to show that she was –or was not– for the other two accomplices the instigator of this horrific and unnatural crime. In her specific case, you will observe that nothing in the statements of the two inmates, Springer and Mandeville, can be admitted into evidence to implicate her in the assassination. Yet, if through other evidence, you find that she was, for one or both, the instigator in the killing of her husband, you will indict her for complicity."

After careful study and Byzantine deliberations, the Grand Jury accepted the indictment of both accomplices (Springer and Mandeville) for murder, as well as an indictment of complicity against Mrs. Snow. The triple indictment was more justifiable than thirteen.



At the end of the *Coroner's Inquest*, the trial itself began on the morning of January 10th, 1834. Rarely were the procedures dispatched more quickly; hardly slower than the KKK lynchings thirty years later, but also very brief if we consider the distressing condemnation to the death penalty, predictable for the defendants. Why waste taxpayers' money on paperwork for a *bunch of papists*? Despite the large number of prosecution and discharge witnesses, the trial lasted no longer than the life of an ephemeral bug who is born at dawn, at sunrise, and dies at dusk, when the day turns into the night.

Witnesses scrolled quickly, from Kit White to the Snow daughters. Always on the alert, prancing in her candor and combative in her harsh assaults, John Snow's wife continued to claim her innocence and to proclaim it to

everyone, knowing that this was the only way for her to save her head. But this did not prevent the jurors, no doubt in a hurry to go to their homes for dinner after a long and tiring day's work, from deciding in 30 minutes that the first three defendants¹¹ were legally guilty. Judge Boulton, also in a hurry, quickly followed the expected sentence:

—*Tobias Mandeville's body, after his hanging, will be "dissected and anatomized"*¹².

Arthur Springer, the indentured-servant of the victim¹³, and Catherine Mandeville-Snow, the wife of the victim, guilty of "Petit-Treason"¹⁴. They would also be, after death, given to the barber-surgeon who would dissect them with medical students, to *combine the useful with the unpleasant*.

Finally, THE ROYAL GAZETTE and THE NEWFOUNDLAND ADVERTISER of January 14th, 1834, inform us that, instead of being dissected, the two corpses were transported—that is to say, deported—to Port-Grave, loaded with chains and re-hanged in the middle of the popish community of the place, to serve as a warning to all papists who would be tempted to commit a crime.

Arthur Springer himself had obtained no mercy, no compassion, no pity for having demonstrated, by his

¹¹ Springen, Mandeville and Catherine.

¹² ●Dissected and anatomized: the two words meant *dissected* but the second implied an observation of the various constituent elements, which allowed medical students to appropriate the bodies.

¹³ ●The same one who couldn't shoot his boss, out of pity.

¹⁴ ●Most of the legal terms in the English language come from the Old French of the French province of Normandy where William the Bastard came from.

failure, that he had retained a certain sensitivity despite his role as "*first knife*".

So, it was "the rope for the three"... and no later than the following Monday, January 13th. Three short days of respite. A death more expeditious than ever! *The execution did not even give the three terrorized convicts enough time to Appeal*. It was intentional, of course!

Then, the pseudo-lawyer who had taken charge of Catherine Mandeville-Snow's defense, suddenly stood up and asked to speak; and as a good magician, came out — not from his hat but from his long blond-ashy wig that fell on his shoulders like two cocker-spaniel ears— a white rabbit that stunned everyone:

—Mrs. Snow cannot be executed because... she's pregnant!

The white rabbit was a baby! If this revelation was not a ruse —then unverifiable— it was obvious that the young cousin had left more than his pants in the marital bedroom of the unfortunate husband. And in doing so, he had offered Catherine a reprieve of life. Despite the savagery of the customs of yesteryear, pregnant women were not hanged, as this would have made illegal the execution of an innocent baby. Embryos were then called *human persons*, unlike today. Retrograde evolution. The judge immediately ordered a committee of matrons to check whether the revelation was not a mere delaying tactic.

—Twelve respectable matrons will form a committee to decide whether the prisoner's pregnancy allegations are real or fictitious!

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On Saturday morning, after a long, wide and thorough inspection, the matrons came to declare that the convict had not lied. A provisional grace period was therefore granted to Catherine... alone...



On January 13th, the two male convicts climbed the 13 steps of the scaffold as planned. Moreover, Catherine was able to admire their silent courage from the small window of her cell. By a very special favor, she had been attributed the one that had a breathtaking view of the gallows. Perhaps it was secretly hoped that the horror of the execution would result in a nervous miscarriage that would allow her to follow them more quickly on the ethereal path to the *Afterlife*?

A journalist from **THE PUBLIC LEDGER** wrote on January 14th: "Mandeville experienced his exit from this world with little suffering and plunged into Eternity with minimal hesitation. His miserable companion endured a struggle to survive for nearly three minutes before his animal life breath was extinguished. After being hanged for about half an hour, the two bodies were brought down and put in a coffin. It was expected that they would be given another hanging at *Spectacle Hill*, very close to where the crime had been committed, as a salutary warning to criminal candidates of the terrible consequences of committing it." So, it was done!

The pregnancy, the imminent birth of the child, and the hanging that would immediately follow the advent, reduced Catherine Mandeville-Snow's health to a poor condition. As might be expected, morale was not high, and the psychosomatic effects complicated the timing of the

woman's execution. Catherine's poor health delayed her death. Because, curiously, you must be in excellent physical health to die on the battlefield or on the scaffold.

The Irish Catholic bishop of Newfoundland, Michael Fleming, tried to make Catherine's impending death a *cause célèbre*. As for the Governor-General, Thomas John Cochrane¹⁵, he agreed to delay the execution only until the birth of the baby. One can imagine then that the advent on earth of this orphan was not a very serene event.

On March 22nd, 1834, James Kelly and Gera Purcel, the godfather and godmother of the newborn, presented on the *baptismal font* of the Catholic church on Henry Street, a baby named Richard Snow. He was—at least officially—the son of the victim Richard Snow, and the murderess Catherine Mandeville who had plotted her husband's death. Immediately after her son's weaning, Catherine had to prepare to die. The Catholic prison chaplain, Father Thomas Waldon, the same one who would have the atrocious task of assisting Catherine on the scaffold in order to give her some comfort and exhort her to repentance, proceeded to the baptism of the child.

On July 10th, 1834, Catherine was therefore presented to a committee of magistrates composed of Judges Boulton, Brenton, and Archibald. She was unable to display the slightest sign of contrition since she persisted in declaring herself totally innocent of her husband's death. Why, then, do Judges seek the satisfaction of making criminals confession? Is it to reassure themselves of the doubt of having made a miscarriage of Justice or to justify

¹⁵ A Scottish man but Cochrane was Protestant. Otherwise, he would not have been Governor-General of Newfoundland.

themselves in the eyes of those who think that the Judge was simply wrong?

Considering the criminal's refusal to make amends, the Judges assigned her a new execution date. The Court of Assises hoped to the highest degree that she would not become pregnant again by the merciful works of a compassionate guardian who would like to do his GT¹⁶ this way. Appointment was made for Monday, July 21st. The Catholic chaplain of the prison tried to circulate a petition in St. John's, but it met with sectarian opposition and was therefore unsuccessful.

Consequently, the petition was dismissed and on the said day, Catherine, detained in her prison on Duckworth Street, had to climb onto the platform, which formed a cornice from the second floor of the prison building. The sinister gallows were just a protruding beam above the pierced balcony. Thomas Waldon, the Catholic chaplain, who had come to baptize her child, supported her with an immense pity. In front of the multitude of Catholics who had come to pay her a final tribute, she placed herself on the hatch, courageously, without hesitation, but firmly protested her innocence:

—I am a wretched woman, she whispered before she died. But I am as innocent of any participation in the crime of murder as an unborn child¹⁷!

It was planned that her body should be smeared with tar for the purpose of temporary preservation, for an

¹⁶ •The GT is the *good deed* that the Scouts must do, every day; it is the *good turn* of the Anglo-Canadian Scouts (in French *la BA* or *Bonne Action*).

¹⁷ •Random translation of: "I was a wretched woman, but I am as innocent of any participation in the crime of murder as an unborn child.

additional hanging on *Spectacle Hill*, as his companions had been, but the Catholic priest —convinced of her innocence or perhaps by *parochialism*— defied Court decisions. He immediately had the dead woman removed that same night and buried within the walls of the cemetery of the Catholic Parish.



Catherine Mandeville-Snow was the last woman hanged in Newfoundland. She was 41 years old. Since that time, it is said that a revenant haunts the Palace of Justice. Some believe it is Catherine's ghost or perhaps that of her husband whose body has never been found. But despite their illusory reputation for candor, most Newfoundlanders do not believe in these absurd legends.



On April 1st, 2012, 178 years after her execution, a people's court organized by the Feminist Movements of Newfoundland, re-played a sham trial (of Madam only!). Catherine was of course acquitted, and most Newfoundlanders thought she had been acquitted *unanimously* because it was presented as such by the Organizing Association. But this was not the case. Only 250 jurors acquitted her of her husband's murder. But a small detail was simply concealed: *200 other jurors declared that her file did not contain enough evidence to exonerate her of this crime.* Four bolder jurors even dared to vote *guilty*.

The CBC journalists who reported the fact, as well as those of the local newspaper ***THE TELEGRAM***, merely mentioned only *the acquittal*, suggesting that it had been

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decided *unanimously* by the 454 members of the jury. "Retrial Finds Last Hanged Woman Not Guilty"... or nearly so.

The feminist organizations thus wished to prove by this little lie that, *in our enlightened century, our society had become just and equitable towards women, and that they were no longer condemned for banal infidelities against their husbands.* The old convictions of women¹⁸ for infidelity, is still very much alive in the minds of all. In this case, Catherine was not convicted of infidelity but of premeditated murder in order to seize the couple's property. And she was convicted for this crime and not for having cheated her husband as in a vaudeville boulevard.

Who claimed that journalists can sometimes mutilate the truth?



¹⁸ ●Called: "slut-blaming and slut-punishing" in feminist texts.

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